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THE DUKE

AND

THE COUSIN

SUMMARY

BY MRS. GREY,

AUTHOR OF "SYBIL LENNARD," "THE GAMBLER'S WIFE,"
"THE YOUNG PRIMA DONNA," ETC. ETC.

15

"Oh, woman! in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please,
And variable as the shade
By the light quivering aspen made.
When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou!"

SCOTT.

Philadelphia:
T. B. PETERSON AND BROTHERS,
306 CHESTNUT STREET.



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THE DUKE AND THE COUSIN.

CHAPTER I.

"I ever read
Pride was unmovely."

In a splendid drawing-room, in one of the finest houses in London, where unbounded wealth had accumulated every luxury to satisfy even her fastidious taste, Lady Clairville reclined on her velvet fauteuil, listless and unhappy. The surrounding elegance of the apartment, with its costly decorations, was all unheeded by her, and a little writing-table she had pushed from before her, and on which lay a half-written note, showed she had found even the task of tracing a few lines on the highly-scented paper, wearisome. She was now absorbed in deep meditation: and the knit brow and compressed lips told that her thoughts were far from satisfactory.

Lady Clairville was a beautiful woman; the forty summers which she had numbered had taken nothing from the brilliancy of her eye, or the majesty of her form. Pride and worldly-mindedness had done more to deteriorate the loveliness she once possessed; and the gazer now turned dissatisfied from the haughty and unsubdued expression of her countenance. In a distant corner of the extensive saloon, a young and interesting girl was seated at a table covered with drawing materials. She held the pencil in her hand, but at that moment her attention was riveted by the conversation of a young man who stooped beside her, and was earnestly speaking in a low tone of voice.

"Julian!" at length exclaimed Lady Clairville, peevishly, whose notice had been attracted by a name uttered more perceptibly, with the increased reticence which now marked the conversation of her son; "I wish you would come and talk to me. What are you whispering to Blanche all this time? I recollect I have something of importance to say to you."

Julian approached his mother with a slow and lingering step, which certainly did not evince the alacrity of affection; and as he threw himself on a sofa near her, said carelessly, as if he dreaded the tediousness of the conversation,—

"Well, I am ready to hear all your ladyship has to say."

"Julian, how much I dislike that *poco curante* air you have lately assumed: whenever I address you," angrily commenced Lady Clairville; then adding, "however, I feel too much annoyed by something that has happened, to discuss your odious Oxford manners at present." She continued anxiously; "you are acquainted with the Duke of Strathaven; can you give me any clue to guess what induced him to torment me last night at the Opera with so many questions relative to my brother? He actually embarrassed me, and I feared at the moment that misusing the condescension which induces him often to converse with you, you had spoken to him of these unlucky Cecils. You know that it is a very awkward and disagreeable subject, for your uncle has disgraced himself completely by his folly, to call his extravagance by no harsher name, or the thoughtlessness which has occasioned all this hu-

millation, and which now obliges him to fly his country. How people can exceed their income, I never could conceive; however limited my means might have been, I should certainly have curtailed my expenses accordingly."

Thus spoke the pampered child of prosperity, who, in the hardness of heart and apathy of feeling engendered by luxury, forgot to sympathize with those who had to struggle with the contending influences of pride, and poverty, even though one of their many victims was her brother. She knew not, surrounded as she was by affluence and splendor, of the sickening desire to "keep up appearances," as it is termed, —condemned, even while persisted in,—by those whose fortune is inadequate to their position in society. She could not make allowances for those over whom the arbitrary dominion of the world of fashion was by circumstances established, and whose shrinking pride feels that they are only estimated according to their power of following its decrees and, dreading for themselves, and those dear to them, the inferior grade to which any failure in the exactions of society would banish them, madly persevere in a career which every serious reflection must tell them will end in ruin. It is comparatively easy to retreat from the world in our own person; but how repugnant to our feelings to withdraw beloved children from the station to which their innate refinement of mind and manners seems to give them a powerful claim; and for whom an intermixture with an inferior class is an evil more to be deplored, even than the fearful anxieties of exceeded means.

Far be it from me, however, to advocate the cause of extravagance—the misery which I seek to depicture in the subsequent history, is one feeble example of its many baleful consequences; but at the same time that we are fully aware of the criminal nature of profuse expenditure, and could quote many a word of wisdom to show the path by which it may be avoided, still we may pity those gentle hearts who, wanting the firmness to extricate themselves from the toils and fancied claims of society, are crushed by the blighting hand of self-inflicted poverty. Lady Clairville deplored nothing of this: she resented the disgrace to herself in the involvements of her brother; but, immersed in sensual gratification and selfish indulgence, her heart was alike dead to the claims of kindred, or the knowledge of human misery. She had yet to learn of a "judgment to come," and that the requisitions of the Almighty are regulated by his gifts, in the strictest and most awful proportion.

As the subject of the conversation Lady Clairville commenced with her son, caught his attention, he seemed roused from the apathy with which he first approached her. His color rose violently; and at every word of reproach directed towards his uncle, his eye flashed with the fire of anger; but he was silent. After a short pause for his reply, Lady Clairville again spoke.

"Julian, you do not appear to have heard what I said: why do you not answer? In general, you are tolerably attentive upon that subject."

"Mother," exclaimed the young man, starting from his seat impatiently, "what would you have me say? Why tempt me to express opinions which you deem disrespectful and improper? You are always angry when I mention my sentiments towards my uncle and every member of his family; therefore, why urge me to repeat what is offensive to you? You are well aware," he continued with a vehemence of manner which increased with every word he uttered, "that if my opinion had been taken, you need not have blushed when the Duke of Strathaven inquired after your brother. Had you come forward, as you ought to have done, to their assistance—had you offered his wife and children an asylum in any one of your houses, during my uncle's temporary absence—there would then have been no shame in the business, on your side at least. As it is, you have unnaturally refused them the support of your countenance and influence in society; and by cruelly deserting and taunting them in their distress, have offered an example the heartless world is but too glad to follow; while you have, as it were, forced them to the obscurity and concealment which they too delicately, and so singularly observe. The very idea of the discomfort to which my poor aunt may be exposed actually distracts me," Julian continued, again quitting the seat he had for a moment taken, and pacing rapidly the apartment in uncontrollable agitation; "and for that sweet Evelyn to have to undergo, with her refinement and innocence, the horrors of poverty! Thank Heaven! I have every reason to believe that Herbert is with them: he will protect her from the approach of impertinence or vulgarity."

He was proceeding in this sort of audible soliloquy, when Lady Clairville interrupted him, and with angry bitterness exclaimed,—

"Really, Julian, this is too absurd, too childish; and convinces me more firmly, that I had good reason not to give my support to these pauper relations. Do you think that I can tolerate even the idea of my son allying himself to a girl whose only claim to the distinguished title he will one day give his wife, is her flimsy beauty? particularly when I have views for him so every way splendid, and which it only rests with himself to realize."

Lady Clairville uttered these last words in an under tone; but the precaution was unnecessary, as the gentle girl Julian had left at the drawing-table had withdrawn from the apartment at the first commencement of the angry discussion. On perceiving this, Lady Clairville continued aloud,—

"My brother, with all his ridiculous, high-flown notions for his children, no doubt has settled the connection in his own mind; but I shall take care to frustrate the scheme to the best of my power. You know my wishes, ungrateful boy! and I insist upon your obeying them. Recollect, that I stand in the place of both parents towards you, as your father's feeble health and spirits prevent his interference; recollect, also, that although you may ultimately claim a title, the fortune which may accompany it depends quite on my will. A word from me may doom the future Lord Clairville to starve on a pittance."

An indignant and resentful look was the only answer the offended Julian returned to the lengthened tirade of Lady Clairville; and, on observing that she intended no farther remark, coldly bowing, he left the room. His mother felt she had gone too

far, and with mingled feelings of rage and regret, she sank back on her seat, revolving in her own mind how to bring Julian to obedience, without injuring the influence she at one time held over him, and which she was now conscious her late and vehement opposition to his wishes and opinions had considerably weakened.

Lady Clairville's information to her son, respecting the secondary position in which the viscount stood in the family, was perfectly correct. In consequence of the age and exceeding infirmities of Lord Clairville, the sole charge of Julian devolved upon his mother, who was but little calculated for so anxious and responsible a care. It is true that the young Julian evinced naturally a noble and amiable disposition; but it was mingled with much of the impetuosity and recklessness of youth, added to a haughty fixedness of purpose, that rendered his character a fearful mixture of good and evil. In sensible and experienced hands the evil in his nature might have been almost entirely eradicated; but spoiled and indulged to the utmost excess as a child, and injudiciously checked and thwarted, as he grew older, he retained, as he advanced to manhood, faults of temper which seemed strangely at variance with his excellent disposition. Still, even with these imperfections, he was a noble and generous creature, full of the best and finest impulses; while the pride, and uncompromising nature of his character, were seldom evinced, except to the unworthy and presuming.

An early and favorite scheme of Lady Clairville, and consequently of the viscount, who knew no other will than that of his imperious wife, had been the union of their son with the orphan niece of the former. Not that the gentle Blanche owed this preference to her own individual excellence, but to the circumstance of her great wealth, and because in her was vested the rank of her ancestors. As Baroness De Cressy, she was an object of unceasing interest to her ambitious aunt; who, coveting the peeress for her son's bride, saw and felt nothing of the many virtues with which the high-born girl was crowned. Loving his fair relative with all the tenderness of a brother, Julian evinced in his own person, how difficult it is to control or direct affections of a more ardent description. As the young people advanced in life, the plans that were formed for them dawned upon their minds, producing, however, only the mutual resolve, that they should ever remain as they had hitherto been—the kindest and most united friends; but nothing more. And thus, while the perfect good will and understanding, which evidently existed between them, encouraged the hopes Lady Clairville had formed for their future union, they were in fact mutual confidants of the deep and youthful affection that beat in the bosom of either for their much-loved and pitied cousins, Herbert and Evelyn Cecil.

Previous to the fatal involvements of Captain Cecil, and the almost utter destitution they occasioned, the two families had lived upon terms of great intimacy: not that there was much sympathy between Lady Clairville and the wife of her unfortunate brother, but each rejoiced in the happiness their constant meetings appeared to yield to the junior branches of the family. However, when Captain Cecil's embarrassments became the topic of general conversation, Lady Clairville's conduct was so cruel and unsisterly, that her brother, partaking

perhaps, too much of the natural pride of his sister's disposition, with his mind irritated by distress, and the unkindness which he had received from the source from whence he ought to have derived consolation, most positively forbade his children to hold the slightest communication with the Clairvilles. Indeed, so great was his dread that his children should receive assistance from any one connected with the sister who had so cruelly spurned and taunted him in his misfortunes, that he exacted the most sacred promise from every member of his family, that they should most scrupulously conceal themselves from their relations while the season of adversity lasted. Captain Cecil was too much loved not to be conscientiously obeyed; and though deeply deploring his decree, they themselves assisted in the measures which were taken to prevent even their very existence being known to any of Lord Clairville's family. These precautions were most effectual; and vainly did Julian, assisted by Blanche, seek to discover the spot chosen for their retreat.

Lady Clairville most truly rejoiced at this circumstance. She had lately foreseen, with undisguised dismay, the frustration of all her long-cherished plans, in the evident interest which Julian evinced for the beautiful Evelyn, the eldest daughter of Captain Cecil. Too proud to dissemble, the extent of his attachment soon became known to his mother, after her first suspicions had been awakened; and perhaps it was this knowledge which prompted the cold and cutting sarcasms directed to her brother, so calculated to produce the estrangement which ensued. Once removed from the immediate and increasing influence which the daily sight of Evelyn's attractions assumed over her son, Lady Clairville fondly believed that Julian would again experience for Blanche the affection which this, as she considered it, ephemeral admiration for his cousin had weakened; but when she perceived the complete alteration his character underwent, from the first moment of the Cecils' disappearance,—now gaiety and thoughtlessness being replaced by deep dejection, and, towards herself, a chilling moroseness; she trembled for her cause, which she further injured by her intemperate and injudicious mode of proceeding.

CHAPTER II.

"His friends were half estranged, and vulgar me
Presumed upon their services and grew
Familiar with him."

* * * * *

"And in her chamber sat his wife in tears,
And his sweet babes grew sad with whisper'd fears."

It was the boast of the father of Captain Cecil, that he had once refused a peerage; and had never, by any commercial undertaking, added to the fallen fortunes of the Cecil family. The consequence was, that he died, leaving the ancient honors of his race unalloyed, it is true, with modern nobility; but, at the same time, his income so diminished that his widow found herself reduced to the necessity of considerably contracting the scale of her expenses, and retiring to comparatively private life. All who knew her, felt that in the lovely retirement of Riversdale Abbey, where she possessed a small property, Mrs. Cecil had found a sphere much better suited to her gentle virtues, than those scenes of superficial splendor and ill-supported ostentation, which had marked her married life. There was nothing to be regretted on the score of this seclusion as regarded others; for

the two Misses Cecil, influenced, perhaps, by the pride which had mingled with every action of their father, and indeed, acting by his persuasion, had both, though young, made splendid marriages. It was thus he termed connections to which pride and worldly feeling had alone conducted. Julia, the eldest, had given her lovely self to Lord Clairville; stipulating, however, for enormous settlements, as it were to indemnify her for wedding age and infirmity. Blanche, the younger sister, more happy in her choice, was united to the young Lord de Cressy; but even here, sickness and decay triumphed over wealth and rank; and, five years after their marriage, he died, leaving her afflicted with the same pulmonary complaint which had begun its work of death even before their union. She did not long survive him; and the orphan peeress, in whom centred all the glory and fortune of the ancient family of Cressy, was left to the guardianship of Lady Clairville; thus proving to the last, how great was the influence which the imperious Julia had ever exercised over her unresisting sister.

In the amiable disposition and lightsome spirit of her only son, Mrs. Cecil found much to reconcile her to the comparative estrangement which had ever existed between herself and her worldly-minded daughters. She engaged a private tutor for him; and, in his affectionate society, while witnessing the daily improvements he made in intellect and knowledge, she felt more than repaid for the violence her tastes and ideas had undergone in former years. This, however, was not to last long. At fifteen, his often combated wish of choosing the navy as a profession, was again called forth, by meeting a distinguished admiral visiting at a neighbour's house. The generous ardor of the boy pleased the veteran, who saw in him the spirit, that was sure to raise him to distinction; and joining his entreaties to those of the enthusiastic Herbert, Mrs. Cecil was by them induced to give her consent to her son's entering the navy. There was nothing now between the lonely widow and her God: and years passed on and found her free from the intervening idols which the world offers for the worship of the weak-hearted, with her whole soul dedicated to her Creator.

It is true, she at times saw her son, and scarcely an hour passed that some heaven-bound prayer did not rise for his welfare. Still he seemed no more the child of her bosom; and she learned to look upon him as one for whom his country, his wife, and his children, had equal claims with herself.

Shortly after obtaining his rank as commander, Captain Cecil married a young and lovely woman, who, moreover, was heiress to considerable wealth. His own fortune, also, was materially improved by some extensive piratical captures off the South American coast; and the first act of his extended finances was the purchase of Riversdale Abbey, a beautiful demesne immediately contiguous to his mother's cottage. It was there he left his wife and children during those periods of absence which his high professional abilities often caused, and it was there they gained those lessons in piety and virtue which rested by them to the end of their lives.

At the period in which this history commences, Captain Cecil had been for some time without any naval employment. Since the battle of Algiers, where he had gathered bright and unfading laurels, he had not been called upon by the Admiralty, and was left to that perfect leisure which marks the hours of

men, thrown, as it were, out of their professional career. The brave and active sailor had now but one pursuit,—that of contributing to the happiness of his family. A strict disciplinarian and daring officer, he was still a man of a peculiarly amiable temperament. Mild, tender, and affectionate in private life, his heart was deeply impressed with the feelings of social and domestic love; and while in the hazardous profession, of which he was a distinguished member, he ever evinced a manly firmness and an unflinching zeal,—the gentleness which characterized him as a husband and a father, was equally remarkable. Alas! where, even in the best and brightest examples of human nature, where can we find that nature perfect?

Captain Cecil, with all his great and excellent qualities, had also his besetting weaknesses. Brought up amidst the pomps and vanities of the world, and accustomed to see the sacrifices made to them, they assumed a false consequence in his eyes; thus the being who had suffered hardships and deprivations with an unruffled brow, still paid an undue homage to the ~~basal~~ adornments and luxuries of life. It is true, he coveted, more for his family than himself, the factitious advantages which are to be derived from wealth and situation; still he did covet them, thus showing the importance they held in his estimation, though no selfish feeling mingled with his desire of possessing them. His income, though not large, was amply sufficient; and, with attention to economy, he might in partial retirement have brought up his children in respectability and comfort, still leaving enough for the exigencies which, with an increasing family, are scarcely foreseen.

But Captain Cecil's connections were all moving in the first circles; then why—was the question, half put to himself—why deprive his children of the advantages such connections were likely to produce? It was in a measure robbing them of their birthright; and the result of this idea was the establishment of his family in one of the most expensive houses in the Regent's Park.

Once in London, they were soon drawn, by the force of circumstances and example, into a vortex of extravagance and dissipation. The consequences were such as might be expected: in a few years Captain Cecil found his finances in a most embarrassed state, with the consciousness, that his family were becoming daily more expensive in their ideas—while in fact, more was required for them. Not possessing the firmness and energy to place that confidence in his wife and children, with regard to the involved state of his affairs, which would have led them to join hand and heart with him in breaking through their present ruinous and unprofitable mode of life, he chose rather to postpone the day of retrenchment, than confide the tale of his pecuniary distress to those whom he loved too well to afflict.

Blessed in the affections of the most amiable of wives, he was in that respect, "happy past the common lot." She was indeed one of the sweetest personifications of women. Mild, tender, and confiding, she was devoted to her husband; and her ardent love magnifying all his real excellence, to her he was perfection. Mrs. Cecil was still young and beautiful; but no thought of herself was intermixed with the satisfaction that the knowledge of her beauty brought to her heart. If she rejoiced that she was fair, it was because the husband of her affections looked with gladness on her lovely countenance. If

she mingled in dissipated society, it was not that she enjoyed the haunts of gaiety, for her heart was in her home; but her husband considered it expedient, that they should thus cultivate the extensive circle of their connections and friends. He must be right; and his will was her heart's dearest law. However, she fancied that their income could be scarcely adequate to their expenditure, and her only source of unhappiness arose from that idea. She labored to be economical; but money must be spent, and their style of living induced many and great expenses. Still, as long as her husband looked cheerful, Mrs. Cecil, with that feeling of hope which too often lurks near the heart that it deceives, was fain to trust that all was right.

As time went on, many were the moments of uneasiness and thought with which her bosom was troubled; and although there was a degree of uncertainty in her apprehensions, yet there were circumstances which occurred to make her fear, that the gay answer sometimes given to her anxious interrogations had more in it of tenderness for her feelings, than of truth.

Had Captain Cecil possessed only the firmness to make his wife really aware of the exact state of his circumstances, and to have decided on bringing up his children according to their prospects, instead of squandering on their pleasures the resources necessary for their future welfare, from what anguish he might have been spared! what comfort and assistance he would have derived, from confiding in one so nearly interested as a mother, the distress which threatened to involve her children! But, though equal to any sacrifice for those he so dearly loved, there was one obstacle to his well-doing,—one fatal feeling, which hastened the misfortunes his affection would have taken any step to avert, but that of self-humiliation: a confession of his embarrassments must of necessity have impugned at once his good sense, and that high sense of honor, which should shrink from the degradation of debt.

The most difficult error to conquer is pride. This passion, excited by the tempter, burned in the breast of its first victim, and she fell! And who of Eve's posterity can say, that they are wholly exempt from its deadly influence? There is no affection of the mind so much blended in our nature, and wrought into our very constitution, as pride. It appears under a multitude of disguises, and is betrayed by a thousand symptoms. It causes the first dissensions in the nursery, and even lingers on the death-pillow of old age; and although we are taught to believe that it is abhorred by God and man, as the baneful spring from whence all other vices flow, still do we suffer it to steal unobserved upon the heart, where, veiled under a variety of unsuspected appearances, it will assume even the form of humility itself.

It was the pride of circumstance, and his position in society, which was Captain Cecil's besetting sin. He feared the world's dread laugh—that world, which, speaking literally, means the thoughtless and the foolish who inhabit the earth; the prosperous, who, holding all from the hand of a beneficent Providence, behold with a criminal contempt the less endowed of their fellow-creatures, who follow with moderation, and contentment, the more private path which that Providence has assigned to them. He feared the taunts of the shallow worldling; and how much more intensely did he fear to own to his

wife, and to his children, that the husband—the father of their love—had deceived them! For what was it but deception, to excite wishes and inclinations which he knew it would be beyond his power to fulfil?

Thus infatuated, we need not wonder that the unhappy Captain Cecil became daily more implicated in all the horrors which mark the hours of those who have forfeited their independence, by incurring claims they have not the power to annul. The high-souled sailor had to soothe the just, but offensive anger of the vulgar citizen, who felt defrauded by him of his lawful maintenance. The tenacious man of honor, who ever visited with the severest treatment the slightest dereliction from truth in any of his officers, had now to speak promises and fair words to clamorous creditors, whom he felt it was his purpose to deceive. The descendant of a long and honorable line of ancestry, with feelings at once refined by birth and situation, had to associate with the *bourgeois millionaire*, or the narrow-minded stock-broker, and even intercede for the loan which further involved him, while he was obliged to show courtesy and patience to men, from whose coarse familiarity and presumption his very soul shrank with disgust.

But this was not all. Strange visitors and urgent messengers had been seen: loud and angry expostulations had been heard at different times, by his wife and elder children; and in their anxious looks he read the natural, though unuttered question—“Why is all this?” Still, he could not speak; but, trusting things would go on better, busied himself in plans of pleasure, and engaged fresh masters in interesting studies; seeking thus to remove the cloud of sadness, which the expressive countenances of those he loved presented to him. At times he succeeded; and then the deluded man would strive for the minute to forget, what “unreal mockery” are festivity and splendor, in an insolvent’s house!

CHAPTER III.

“Who hath walk’d
The world with such a winning loveliness
And on its bright brief journey gather’d up
Such treasures of affection? She was loved
Only as idols are. She was the pride
Of her familiar sphere—the daily joy
Of all who on her gracefulness might gaze,
And in the light and music of her way,
Have a companion’s portion.”

HERBERT, the eldest son of Captain Cecil, was, at the time he is presented to my readers, nearly twenty; Evelyn, his lovely sister, two years younger; four other children completed the family—a boy of nine years old, and three younger little girls.

Herbert, both in person and in mind, was somewhat in advance of his years. He was a grave and studious youth; and his dark eyes and complexion, with the beautiful oval of his classically formed face, gave something of a sublime character to his thoughtful and yet mild, countenance. On a first meeting, his deep intellectual glance, the compressed lip that spoke of serious reflection, and his cold and retiring manners, gave the impression that the studious precincts of a college was the sphere best suited for him; but, on a further acquaintance, when the energy and enthusiasm of his character became evident, and the eye dwelt with admiration on the open and manly brow, around which the dark curls

clustered with wild profusion—or beheld the beautiful and athletic proportions of his youthful figure, one felt that his profession had been wisely chosen for him, and that he promised to grace, as well as to do honor to, a military career. Indeed, his heart was now set, with all its native enthusiasm, on the path inclination, as well as persuasion, had led him to select; and he looked forward with certainty, soon to obtain a commission.

With characteristics of a very different nature, still was Evelyn—the sweet, the winning, Evelyn—the adored idol of her brother’s heart. Nothing could be more touching—more beautiful to behold, than the deep affection which mutually influenced them: so pure, so confiding—so unmixed with the dross and affectation of the majority of worldly ties. It was a love that angels might look upon, and smile approval. How seldom is it that the affection of maturer years carries with it so much of trust, so little of selfishness, as that of our early youth! That love which mingles in all our dreams of the past, when the brother, the sister, who was the sharer of our young joys as well as sorrows, appear before us, as they were in those by-gone days, with all their youth and freshness. In after life, that love will still hover near the heart; and although the cold world, with all its blighting influences, may chill our other feelings, still that will continue to shed within our breasts the light and warmth of earlier years!

With a countenance glowing with the bloom of beauty, which spoke of health and happiness—with spirits cheerful and bright as the spring, her sweet emblem, the life of Evelyn, until the period at which this history commences, had offered no cloud of sorrow to dim the gay sunshine of her mind or person. Her hours had passed in a round of perpetual gladness; nor could she look forward to any thing but happiness. Surrounded by those she so dearly loved, and cherished by them, as the brightest treasure of their hearts, she had never breathed a wish that was ungratified; and with no experience beyond her school-room, where even in that solemn apartment, she had always “laughed the hours away,” she could scarcely picture to herself aught but joy. It is true she was sad when Herbert’s studies called him from home; but her rejoicings at his return more than compensated for that passing sorrow. The liveliness of her mind, in a manner imparted itself to all around; even a brighter smile emanated from the dark eyes of her grave brother, as he watched her lovely countenance, and listened to the animated tone of her young voice, and the gaiety with which she commenced every task, that circumstances of choice had imposed—the playful vivacity with which she spoke,—the grace in all her actions,—combined with her merry laugh, her light step, her beaming eye, cheered even the hearts of those not so interested in her happiness. Her father too, deeply idolized her; and, while with watchful tenderness, he would have removed even the rose leaf from her path, he thought the brightest of this world’s goods scarcely equal to the merits of his sweet Evelyn. And fondly, indeed, was she loved by her gentle mother, who often gazed upon her till a tear rose in her eye, and a sigh heaved from her heart, as she breathed the fervent prayer that she might ever be thus free from care.

The Cecil family passed half the year in London—the other portion was spent at Riversdale

Abbey, where the children had every species of country amusement; as if the tender father thought by their ponies, their flower gardens, their aviaries, to indemnify them, as it were, for the more serious studies they pursued in town, where masters of every description constantly attended them.

But it was at Riversdale, the dear old Abbey, that lessons of far greater importance were engrafted upon their hearts. In their daily visits to the cottage of the elder Mrs. Cecil, they gained that knowledge which 'maketh wise unto salvation;'—and by the conversation and example of the pious invalid—for such, a long series of rheumatic attacks had rendered her,—they acquired that love of religion and holiness which never left them in after life.

Had Captain Cecil, on the first approach of involvement, entirely given up his London residence for Riversdale, a decision so many reasons combined to make desirable, much of his subsequent difficulty would have been spared him. In the comparative seclusion of the country, he would have found it a harder task quite to shut out the consciousness of his overweening expenses; and retrenchments early, and therefore efficient, would have been the consequence. But here, even with the least selfish of men, self interfered; he liked the usual tenor of London society, disliking the customary habits of country gentlemen. His early entered profession had precluded his imbibing a taste either for agriculture, or the amusements connected with field sports; and his mind too soon became troubled with care and financial anxieties, to enable him to find pleasure in the calm pursuits of literature. Besides this, he thought with Milton, that "Beauty is Nature's brag;"—and he loved to show his beautiful Evelyn to admiring crowds—"where most could wonder at the workmanship." Above all, it was his rooted opinion, that with two sons, who must assist in making their own fortunes, instead of sharing the provision, which, in the event of his death, he was desirous to secure to his widow and four girls, it was highly essential to cultivate those influential connections he already possessed, and if possible to make others. There was much of reason in the idea, if it had been acted upon with moderation: as it was, the substance was risked for the shadow; and Captain Cecil continued the struggle between pride and circumstance, duty and integrity, high ambition for his children and self-reproach at his own conduct: until, with his mind harassed by the perpetual conflict which imparted itself to his manners, he became absent, irritable, and morose.

The change in one usually so mild and tender, was too soon felt, and the wife's heart sickened within her, as for one minute the dark fancy passed over her, that perhaps it was her lot to deplore the loss of his love—of her husband's love—the father of her children! It was but a minute's pang; for blessed in the knowledge of his pure and unerring affection, and conscious of the increased tenderness which each day of their married life had witnessed, her happy and well grounded confidence returned. Loss of fortune, with his affection undiminished, she felt she could bear as a minor evil; and her thoughts then turned to that; but in her complete ignorance of their affairs, and judging by the appearance of prosperity around her, she tried to believe that too was impossible. Still, that there was some secret discomfort became perfectly evident; and though aware of a desire on Captain Cecil's part,

to avoid any very confidential conversation, she determined to seize the first opportunity of questioning him on the subject.

The occasion soon presented itself. After a morning of unusual excitement, Captain Cecil one day requested the dinner hour might be early, as he had business in the city which was to be transacted in the evening; and accordingly he left the house immediately after the cloth was removed. It was at the end of May, and the day had been one of more than common sweetness. The early dinner gave Evelyn and her brother the opportunity of an evening ride, which the warm weather made more desirable at that hour; and Julian and Blanche gladly gave up one of the splendid banquets at Clairville House to join their cousins in this summer excursion. Mrs. Cecil watched their departure from the window; and while her eye rested on their young and graceful figures, as they gaily moved from the door, and their merry laugh rung on her ears, she felt that she ought to be happy in their happiness. Still, all failed to dispel the depression of her spirits; and when she saw the younger children set out for their evening walk with their nurses, it seemed an inexpressible relief to her overcharged heart to feel herself thus alone, and to know that she might weep, without fear of interruption. She sought to shake off the weight which oppressed her; and seating herself at the open window, she endeavoured to remove the vague sorrow at her heart, by properly appreciating the blessings around her. All was indeed luxury and elegance; on every side were the marks of her husband's care for her enjoyment and pleasure. At her feet, even blossomed the choicest and freshest flowers, and the balcony vied with the gayest of her *parterres* at Riversdale. Still, this fond tribute to her particular taste now failed to soothe; and the perfume of the *mignonette*, the *Provence rose*, the *Persian violet*, exhaled around her unheeded.

Mrs. Cecil was not the first who has experienced the inadequacy of exterior objects to cheat the mind of any inward grief; indeed, the perturbation Captain Cecil had evinced the whole morning had filled her with a dark dread of evil, which every minute increased; and at length retreating to a couch, in a corner of the apartment, she gave way to a burst of grief, which only seemed to save her heart from breaking. Long and fearful was the agitation that oppressed her; and her long pent-up feelings seemed to have gathered strength from the efforts she had used in controlling them.

By degrees, however, and as if soothed by the unwanted indulgence, a calm came over her troubled spirit; and she could think that, as her sorrow was still imaginary, it was scarcely justifiable. Breathing an ejaculatory prayer, to be spared the continued trial of seeing her husband's altered demeanor, she dried the still flowing tears; and taking up a book, sought to gain calmness in its perusal, for she was aware her little ones would soon enter to receive their kiss of "good night." They came as she expected; with feigned cheerfulness she entered into all their prattling details of the pleasures of the walk; but still she felt it was a relief when they left her, and she found herself once more alone.

In a few minutes, however, the door again opened, and Captain Cecil entered. For the instant she felt embarrassed; and fearful there might still be traces of her late emotion visible, she bent her head to caress the little spaniel, which entering with his

master, bounded on the sofa beside her. For the same reason, although Captain Cecil seated himself on a chair near her, she avoided speaking, lest the tones of her voice should also betray her. He was the first to break silence, by at length remarking querulously—

"Mary—you seem happier to see my dog, than you are to welcome your husband."

"Oh! no," she replied, extending her hand, "I am indeed glad you are returned from your troublesome expedition."

As she spoke, in spite of her best efforts, a tear fell from her eye. This, with the pallid hue of her cheeks, seemed to alarm his awakened attention; and starting from his seat, he for a moment folded her to his bosom, as he asked if any thing had occurred to make her unhappy.

"Oh! nothing, nothing," she exclaimed, a faint smile breaking through her tears. "I have everything this world can give for happiness. Your love, dear Herbert, and my sweet darlings,—but still—you must forgive me—I have indeed been weeping." She drew him to the sofa as she spoke, and then added,—"Herbert, I have one petition to make—one serious prayer," she continued more earnestly; "you are keeping some secret from your wife, who never concealed one thought from you; but if my affection has value in your eyes, if my unfailling tenderness gives me any claim, I beseech you tell me the meaning of your present sadness and altered manner?"

She looked into his eyes with an earnest sweetness, as though she would there read an answer, while her half-open lips seemed to wait in breathless expectancy for his reply. A deep blush mounted to his temples, and an air of irresolution passed over his countenance, which somewhat encouraged her. He rose from the couch, and, for a few moments paced the apartment rapidly, as if to gain calmness for his answer; then suddenly stopping before her, he said in tones of deep tenderness, struggling with emotion—

"Mary, not now—I cannot now,—give me until to-morrow, and you shall know all,—promise not to ask me until then, my own angel wife!"

At this moment the young equestrian party returned from their ride, and soon entered the room, in all the excitement to which their pleasant excursion had given rise. Captain Cecil, pleading headache, almost immediately retired to his room; and in the gaiety and happiness of the cousins, which seemed so perfect when together, the fond mother for the moment forgot her previous anxiety.

Could she have looked into her husband's heart, how different would have been her feelings! The unhappy man had that evening received the confirmed news of the bankruptcy of a house in the city that had advanced large sums on mortgages on the Riversdale property. This he knew must bring things to a climax, unless he could raise money elsewhere; and, deluded and sanguine as he was, he knew this would be an affair of difficulty. Scarcely able to repress the groans which would burst from his fevered lips as reflection came pressing on his now affrighted mind, he pressed his beating brow close to his pillow, and feigning sleep, avoided the questions which tenderness for his health would have prompted.

CHAPTER IV.

"The fountain may not fall the less,
Whose sands are golden ore,
And a sister for her loveliness
May not be loved the more;
But as the fount's full heart beneath
Those golden sparkles shine,
My sister's beauty seem'd to breathe
Its brightest over mine!"

CAPTAIN CECIL rose early the next morning, dreading nearly as much the disclosure he had promised to make, as the involvement which now so fearfully threatened him. He passed his lovely Evelyn on the stair-case, and even her sweet smile, accompanying the salutation of the morning, was a pang to his heart. He felt that her happy hours were perhaps now numbered, and he turned away to hide the tears which rose to his eyes. He did not calculate upon the buoyancy of spirit, and the real strength of mind which indulgence and perfect happiness had hitherto concealed. He knew not that, in common with her brother, she owned those blessed influences which would enable her to endure meekly, and to struggle firmly against the hardest trials of human nature. He thought only of the blight about to fall on their young hearts—on the dark reverse they were likely to sustain, when, just entering into life, all its bright ornaments were most to be prized; and feeling that it was his own misjudging tenderness and profusion which had brought all this about, his mind was smitten with the keenest pangs of self-reproach. At this moment, when thought was becoming so painful, a note from his lawyer assumed almost the form of a relief, calling as it did for immediate action. Hastily swallowing a cup of coffee, he left the house before the rest of the family had descended to breakfast.

About twelve o'clock a note, written evidently in considerable haste, was brought to Mrs. Cecil. It was from her unfortunate husband, telling her that he was about to proceed immediately to Riversdale on urgent business, and pleading the suddenness of his plans as a reason for his not coming to say adieu. He also added, that his absence would be but for a few days, and that the servant would only wait until a carpet bag could be packed, with which he was to meet his master at the coach office. On hearing this, Herbert also proceeded thither, and arrived in time to bid his father farewell, but could not find a moment to inquire into the reason of his pale and haggard looks.

The next day a letter arrived, telling the now anxious wife that his absence must be protracted to a fortnight; and Mrs. Cecil found she had still to wait the explanation she so desired, and yet dreaded.

"Evelyn," said Herbert to his sister, a few days after his father had left the town, "how very wretched I am at the idea of this expedition to Germany, and of leaving you all just as my mother seems to require our united efforts to dispel the sadness which appears to hang over her! You, too, my sweet Eve, are not in your usual spirits,—nay, even while I speak, tears are rising in your eyes. Why is all this?"

Evelyn could not reply, but leaning her head on her brother's shoulder, continued to weep in silence. Passing his arm round her youthful form, he pressed her fondly to his heart, but forbore to interrupt the gentle evidence of her grief, thinking this relief would better enable her to enter on the subject on which he was about to speak.

After the lapse of a few minutes, Evelyn held up her beautiful face, and, looking anxiously to her brother, said, "I am unhappy, Herbert,—very, very unhappy,—but why, I cannot tell you; unless it is the evident inquietude of our dear mother, and the gloom there has been lately on my father's spirits; but, Herbert," she continued earnestly, "you who are so quick-sighted and observant of every thing, is it possible that you have been unmindful of all this?"

"Oh! no, no, dear Evelyn," Herbert replied, mournfully shaking his head. "I have seen all—much more—more than I dared dwell on to myself, much less to you, my gentle sister. But now I must speak. It is weak, it is unmanly, thus to shrink from looking into the evil which I fear threatens us. Evelyn, are you prepared to hear me?" Herbert continued, rising as he spoke, and, to his sister's astonishment, proceeding to the door, which he opened, and looking carefully round, re-entered the room, closing it firmly after him. "This action, and his previous words, conspired to alarm Evelyn, and she sat with her hands clasped, and her face blanched with terror.

"For mercy's sake, speak!" she said quickly, as Herbert again placed himself by her side. By degrees, however, her muscles lost their tension, and her cheeks regained their usual bloom as Herbert, at some length, related to her the many and powerful reasons he had for believing that the change, so perceptible in the whole bearing of their father, was owing to great pecuniary embarrassment and distress.

"Is that *all*, Herbert?" exclaimed Evelyn, springing up from her attitude of despair, "Is that *really* all? Oh! how you relieve me! I had fancied something so much more dreadful. Sometimes I thought it might be some dangerous and fearful expedition that was to take our dear father to sea, and that his honor might be compromised if he declined the service; and then, sometimes, I have been wicked enough to dread—" and here she hid her face in her brother's bosom—"that some disgrace or dishonor was hanging over him for past actions, and your manner just now, Herbert, corroborated this frightful idea, you looked so pale and mournful. Thank God! thank God!" she exclaimed, again resuming her usual attractive animation of manner, "that poverty is the only evil we have to fear. How soon every thing can be arranged! My father can sell this house and dear Riversdale, and we can have a cottage close to grandmamma, which will do just as well. I can teach my sisters, and you can act as tutor to Edwin, and not go to that odious Germany. We need not have carriage horses, our ponies and pony chaise will be all we shall require, and we shall be soon as happy as ever. Now, do not look so mournful, my dear, dear Herbert," she added caressingly, and playing with the dark curls that clustered round her brother's troubled brow; "Does there need a casque on this beautiful head to make him still handsomer?" she fondly and playfully asked, as pressing her fair cheek to his, she encircled him with her arm. "He shall be a soldier, and *Blanché de Cressy* shall love him better for his valor." She was suddenly stayed in her endearing and fond rallery by feeling her cheek wet with her brother's tears.

Herbert was indeed weeping, but not for himself; he mourned in spirit to see how little, with her simplicity and perfect unworldliness of mind, his sister anticipated or understood the nature of the evils with

which they were threatened. Loving his sister to idolatry, and thinking her the loveliest of created things, fitted only to live in the sphere of luxury and refinement in which they had been reared, it was his painful task to make her comprehend that the ruin which he too truly anticipated, menaced them with the extreme of penury, and endangered the personal liberty of their father.

He began with judgment, and first touching on the lighter sacrifices she would have to make, spoke of her presentation at Court, which was fixed for the ensuing month—of her first ball at Almack's—of the opera box which her infatuated father had promised her for the next season—of her saddle-horse—her harp master—all, all to be given up. As he expected, a blush of angry emotion suffused her cheeks as he spoke, and interrupting him impatiently, she exclaimed, "O, Herbert, Herbert, this is cruel of you! why speak of such frivolities, which only the excess of prosperity could make one wish for? I know I am foolish, and may have been the means of contributing much to the needless expenses of my poor father; but Heaven is my witness how sincerely I deplore my weakness, and how ready I am by any sacrifice to repair my fault. There is no privation to which I would not submit with the utmost cheerfulness for the welfare of those so dear to me, and to restore our dear father to his usual peace of mind."

"I believe you, my sweet Evelyn," Herbert replied, while his heart glowed with admiration at witnessing the entire forgetfulness of self in the lovely girl before him; "and may God grant you resolution to bear all that he may please to inflict upon you!"

He then entered more fully into the subject of the distress and involvement, which, from the knowledge he had gained, he feared must too soon be made known to them all in its direct extent; and he sought to prepare his sister for the sad reverses she must then endure. He rejoiced to see that, although all color had left her cheek, and the quickly throbbing pulse in her white throat showed she now more completely understood the nature of the evil, still she shrunk not from entering into its details, and questioned him with a low, though calm voice, as to the time when it was probable this dark cloud would burst over them. He was unable to inform her, though suggesting that the bankruptcy of the city banker, with whom he knew his father had money-transactions, must hasten matters. A long silence ensued, and for some time each of these youthful sufferers struggled with deep and painful emotion, in the vain hope of concealing it from the other. Herbert was the first again to speak.

"Evelyn," he said, as he drew her gently towards him, "it is now the time for us to show our parents, that at least their children do not wish to add to their griefs, and that every situation will be endured with cheerfulness by us. Our resignation will spare my father many a pang, and we must assure him that we are ready and willing to give up every thing—your pretty cottage and ponies, Eve—my prospects as a soldier—nay, start not, my sister, or look so incredulous—that trial—and it was a trial—is now over. It would be now a subject for the keenest self-reproach, did I for a moment dare to think of embarking in a profession which, far from enabling me to assist my family, would only entail on it expenses. No, Evelyn, I shall never go into the

army. Thanks to the education I have received, my knowledge of languages will doubtless get me a situation in some office, which will be a means of subsistence for myself, if it does not permit me to contribute to the comforts of my parents. My boyish dream of distinction and glory has all faded away," he added, with a faint smile; "mathematics, and all my Sandhurst lore, must now be forgotten; but rely on my words, Evelyn," he continued, seeing his sister was about to interrupt him with words of commiseration at this sacrifice of his warmest hopes, "we insure to ourselves far greater peace of mind by submitting with resignation to the decrees of the Almighty, than by opposition or repinings at his will; and, even should the knowledge of fulfilled duties, and patiently endured misfortunes, fail to soothe the wounded spirit at the first outset, we may depend much on the efficacy of prayer."

Evelyn did not reply: her young heart was struggling with so many contending feelings she dared not trust her voice, and she longed for the privacy of her own apartment, where she might for a time hide her sorrows, and strive to gain that self-possession which she felt was necessary before she could meet her mother, whom they both rightly guessed was still in ignorance of the misfortunes they had been discussing. She therefore rose to quit her brother, and they parted with a fond, though mournful embrace, which told that in their mutual and pure affection, there was still much of consolation for the ills of life.

CHAPTER V.

"Oh! man may bear with suffering: his heart
Is a strong thing, and godlike in the grasp
Of pain that wrings mortality; but tear
One cord affection clings to, part one tie
That binds him to a woman's delicate love,
And his great spirit yieldeth like a reed."

ONE month after the scene described in the foregoing chapter, the evils there anticipated were realized to a fearful extent by the Cecil family. Having already exhausted every possible channel for relief, the unhappy, and now awakened author of all this ruin, saw in what a fatal position he stood.

There remained but one quarter where he had not sought assistance. It was the last to be applied to, and that application cost the proud heart of the still high-minded Cecil more than any other. It was to his rich and powerful sister he at length addressed himself, for the innocent victims to his blind extravagance. For their sakes he humbled himself to supplication, but, as we have before intimated, was spurned with bitter reproaches and denial. Nothing then remained for him but to leave England, with as much expedition and secrecy as possible, otherwise his arrest would have inevitably occurred, to have heaped still further misery on the heads of his unhappy wife and family. They would joyfully have accompanied him in his flight, but there were two obstacles to this;—the illness of the youngest child, and the fragile strength of Mrs. Cecil, whose trials, added to her expectation of adding in a few months another to the number of the little helpless beings who surrounded her, rendered her health too precarious for even the undertaking of a few hours' journey.

Sad was the parting between the heart-stricken husband and his adored wife. Her fainting spirit sank within her at the desolate prospect of his ab-

sence at a time when his cheering voice, that had whispered solace to her sufferings—his kiss of affection to the mother and the new-born babe, seemed her only earthly support—a support now more than ever to be desired: and he—what pen can describe the anguish that bent him to the earth as he turned from that abode which, like a rich casket, contained all his precious treasures, to seek a shelter in a distant land!

It were a vain and painful task to follow Captain Cecil through all the trying scenes preceding and connected with this hurried departure. The parting injunctions to his noble Herbert; the prayer to his gentle Evelyn, that she would struggle with misfortunes for his sake; the tears shed over the affrighted children, who, comprehending nothing of the distress around them, still wept piteously at his leaving them; and then the death struggle it was to tear himself from his half expiring wife; and, heart-broken with affliction, to have to mingle with the crowd—to act and think on affairs unconnected with the dear ones he had left!

"Oh! when the heart is full—when bitter thoughts
Come crowding thickly up for utterance,
And the poor common words of courtesy
Are such a very mockery—how much
The bursting heart may pour itself in prayer!
He pray'd—and his voice went up
Strongly and fervently. He pray'd for those
Whose love had been his shield—and his deep tones
Grew tremulous."

Thus it was with the unfortunate Captain Cecil. Even amidst the wretchedness and disgrace of a lonely flight, he found solace and strength in the prayers he addressed to Heaven, and though thick sobs choked his utterance as he supplicated the protection of the Almighty for the wife of his bosom and his beloved children, the first night that found him so widely separated from them, still he was soothed by his devotions, and relieved by the tears the act called forth.

Captain Cecil was so universally beloved, that every thing had been conducted with as much delicacy as possible, in the distressing circumstances in which he found himself; and possessing in his lawyer a warm friend, besides an intelligent professional adviser, much of the exposure had been spared him, which usually attends such ruin as his own. All he possessed had been given up without reservation to his creditors. The pittance necessary for his own sustenance, and that of his unhappy family, was derived from his mother, who cheerfully shared with her beloved, though misguided, son, all that was left of her slender income, which had been previously reduced by the assistance she had before afforded him.

Mrs. Cecil and her children only remained in the house in the Regent's Park, until a humble and cheap lodging could be procured for them; into which the heart-broken wife was with difficulty removed, so great was the prostration of strength her sorrows had occasioned. They were accompanied by one female servant, who, with the devotion which is sometimes to be met with in that sphere of life, at once determined to follow the fortunes of a family who were dearer to her heart than any other earthly object. She was the nurse who had been with them from their earliest infancy, and who cherished them with an affection, the warmth of which could scarcely be equalled by that of their mother. In prosperity, she had been a good and valuable ser-

vant: and her kindness and fidelity in adversity, was like a ray of sunshine, in the dark prospects of the Cecils. For her beloved mistress, and the dear children reared by her careful attention; she was ready to sacrifice every thing; personal fatigue, certain inconvenience, weighed not a moment, against her sense of the duty she owed them. No selfish considerations impeded the flow of her kindness, or checked her prompt performance of this labor of love: and when we consider the importance which wealth and station usually hold in the eyes of those in a servile capacity, who arrogate to themselves the distinction of the masters they serve, a d in the same degree feel degraded with them, it is an enhancement of the character of "poor human nature," to know that such examples of self sacrifice are by no means infrequent. Poor Rachael, the nurse, had indeed her trials; and, although they affected none of the deeper feelings of the heart, still the mere reverse of situation she had to sustain, striking as it did at the very prejudices of her station, was of itself a stumbling-block, that would have turned attachment less faithful than her own.

Much to the credit of the female sex, they are known to sustain, with praise-worthy fortitude, those reverses of fortune which have overwhelmed the minds of men with despair; and it is no unusual circumstance, to see the spirit of a woman rise as it were with the strokes of misfortune, and assume an elevation of character, approaching to perfect, excellence. It was thus with our gentle heroine, Evelyn Cecil; and it was an affecting and beautiful spectacle to behold the young and lovely girl, who had hitherto been cherished in the very lap of luxury, changing, as by a magic touch, all the helpless habits, such fostering engenders, to be the comfort and support of those around her; and by active means doing her utmost to lighten the cloud which hung over all in the small and retired house in Kensington, which was now the humble asylum of the unfortunate Cecils.

Leaving the care of amusing and soothing her mother's mind, to the idolized son—the good and affectionate Herbert,—Evelyn's chief scene of action was the apartment called the nursery. But, Oh! how different from the rooms which had before been appropriated to that purpose in the time of their prosperity. Where were the pretty cots, looking more like little beds to be occupied by fairy-queens than human babies? Where, too, the rich litter occasioned by the expensive toys, which used formerly to scatter the floor, and amuse the happy hours of the little Cecils!

The active nursery maids—no longer to be seen bustling about, all waiting upon the important-looking Rachael, who, seated upon her low nursery-chair, her chair of state, lulled on her knee the baby of the family, with its laced cap and embroidered robe, while at the same time she directed with her looks and smiles the lovely little group playing around her; and, with the love and pride these beauteous little beings called forth, fancied they owed half their beauty, and all their health to her fostering care. All was now changed. The present apartment, with its uncarpeted floor, and shabby-looking beds, offered a sad contrast to the nursery they had just left; Evelyn was now the usual occupant of the low nursing-chair, Rachael's present duties being more of a household nature. Poor Evelyn! it was a sad charge which had now devolved on her, and in the

fragile health and increasing weakness of the poor baby, who was scarcely ever out of her arms, she found cause for sorrowful and anxious apprehension. Often when nursing the poor little Rose, who had numbered little more than two years, she felt the tears rise to her eyes, as they rested on its pale and suffering countenance; when fearful of alarming the other children, (who, with affectionate instinct, were playing in silence by her side,) she would tell them to leave her.

Edwin, a beautiful boy of nine, who, with his clustering curls of fair hair, his bright complexion and sunny blue eyes, most resembled his sister Evelyn, ever left her with regret; it was only when requested to take charge of the two little girls, in the narrow court before the house, which aspired to the name of garden, that he quitted his much-loved Evelyn cheerfully. The idea of being of service, even in his young heart, somewhat reconciled him to being absent from her; and it was thus that each of the suffering family sought to spare the mother some trial, while all endeavoured, by tender care and watchfulness, to alleviate the poignant grief which bent their unfortunate parent's spirit to the earth.

CHAPTER VI.

"He was not
In costly raiment clad, nor on his brow
The symbol of a princely lineage wore;
Yet in his mien
Command sat throned serene, and if he smil'd,
A kingly condescension graced his lips."

Among the minor evils attendant on reduced circumstances, it may seem trifling to mention (nevertheless it is by no means an inconsiderable cause of suffering and chagrin) the barrier which is then removed between females of refinement and the world at large. This may not be so acutely felt in the country, where retirement can be generally secured; and if not, there is a deference paid to misfortune, even by the most rustic, which soothes, rather than irritates the sufferer. But in London or other large towns, it is very different. Crowds may daily pass unnoticed and unnoticing; but the young female who, with timid steps and downcast eyes, finds herself in the novel position of walking unprotected amidst a throng, becomes at once an object of rude and inquisitive regard,—which, adding to her embarrassment and fear, gives her a sense of desolation, though surrounded by her fellow-creatures loneliness would fail to inflict.

Poor Evelyn Cecil, with a mind nerved to endurance, by principles of religion as well as affection though suffering all which the rude gaze of strangers must impose on shrinking delicacy, hid even from Herbert her aversion to walk alone, or at least accompanied only by her little brother and sisters. However it had been occasionally necessary that she should visit the solicitor, who was now doing his utmost, to disentangle the confusion of his client's affairs, and also offering as much solace as lay in his power to the wretched family. With this valuable friend, Herbert and his sister were in constant communication. From him they gained tidings of their beloved father, though at present kept in ignorance of his place of refuge; and in return they sent that information of themselves and their proceedings, which was all the alleviation the unhappy parent experienced to his misery.

With cares and occupations for every hour of their

time, it was seldom that Herbert and Evelyn could leave the house together; unless Mrs. Cecil slept during the day, which a restless night rendered necessary, they never quitted her at the same time; and as the household duties which devolved on Evelyn, obliged her frequent absence, it was on Herbert that the care of soothing and amusing his mother's mind chiefly rested. How beautifully did his character display itself in passing through this ordeal! one of such peculiar trial to a youth of his age. His best and brightest hopes were all blighted by the misfortunes of his family; all the brilliant expectations of his youth had faded away! But did he repine! No; though with agony at his heart, from the knowledge of the misery endured by those he so fondly loved, he thought not of the shipwreck his own fortunes had sustained; but with the most devoted tenderness—with a softness and patience of manner, strongly contrasting with the manly tenor and general bearing of his character, he took upon himself the sad task of watching sedulously by the couch of his suffering mother, while occupying and soothing her mind with the sweet hopes that religion permitted him to hold out. But not only did the great qualities and virtues of Herbert shine in the sick room; with judgment far surpassing his years, and the light and brilliant nature of his education, he labored with his father's man of business to bring their affairs into some train for amelioration; and whilst his powerful abilities and clear understanding surprised to the utmost degree the sensible lawyer, the feeling and gentlemanly conduct of the young Cecil inspired him with such deep interest, as made him redouble his active endeavors for the father.

One morning it was essential that Herbert should be in Berner's Street, where this excellent friend resided, to explain some memoranda of his father's which Mr. Disney had forwarded to him. On this occasion, there appeared such an increase of depression on Mrs. Cecil's spirits, when he mentioned he must leave her, and the book he was reading aloud, that tears coursed each other down her pallid cheeks, with all that *abandon* of grief, which the reduced in health and happiness too often feel for comparatively trivial causes. He therefore sought Evelyn, though perhaps even more averse than herself to her walking farther than a retired path in the Park near them, when unprotected by himself; and requested her to take Edwin, and proceed to Mr. Disney, she being as well able as himself to explain all the details required, relative to the affair in question.

The cause was too urgent for her to hesitate; and Herbert again rejoined his mother, who felt almost a sensation of joy at finding she could have him by her side the whole of the morning. Evelyn, wrapped in the folds of a large cloak, and with her beautiful radiant countenance shaded by a thick veil, set out on her expedition with the little Edwin, too proud and too happy to be her cavalier on the occasion.

After having fulfilled her mission, they were returning at a quick pace, and had nearly reached home, when Evelyn found she had lost her watch, now the only timepiece of the family; for with this exception, all the valuables of Mrs. Cecil and her children had been resigned to the creditors. It had been the gift of Julian, her dear and valued cousin. Every time she looked at it, it brought to her remembrance the kind smile and kind words with which it had been given to her. She recollected, too, the delight with which she had received it; and often,

when most miserable, had she taken the glittering token from her bosom, and pressed it to her lips, as if by that act she approached herself nearer to the kind and affectionate cousin whose indulgence had bestowed it upon her. Now that she fancied it was gone for ever, her agony was great; and, though despairing of recovering it, she turned with her brother, for the purpose of seeking for it. In her anxiety the veil had been thrown back; and with a flushed and eager countenance she commenced the search, which with much reason, she feared must prove hopeless. There was one circumstance connected with her loss, which rendered it unnecessary to retrace her steps beyond a certain point; they both recollected that when half-way through the Park, she had taken out her watch to compare it with the clock at the Knights-bridge barracks, which was then striking the hour. As they approached this spot without having recovered the lost treasure, her hopes became more depressed, and with tears in her eyes, which almost impeded their sight as she glanced quickly and anxiously around her, she reached the very place, beyond which her vain search would be even worse than fruitless. So intent had she been in her scrutiny of every step they were taking, that she did not observe a tall man in a sort of military undress, yet with a dignity and grace in his appearance which spoke more of courts than camps, who was standing in the path where they now halted; nor did she witness the looks of curiosity and admiration directed to herself and her little companion, who with his cheeks rosy from exercise and excitement, and with the bright golden curls which half shaded his laughing blue eyes, was the very personification of the "Paphian boy."

"Edwin, it is indeed gone!" Evelyn exclaimed sadly, just as the gentleman, stepping forward, presented to her delighted gaze the lost watch, asking if she had dropped it. Quick and energetic in all her movements, her first impulse was to seize it eagerly, and press it to her lips. Edwin fully participated in her joy, which he evinced by taking the stranger's hand with childish artlessness and exclaiming, "Thank you a thousand times, dear, good sir."

Recalled by his words from her first wild feelings of girlish delight, Evelyn, in her turn, expressed her acknowledgments with graceful warmth and courtesy; encouraged by the mild and gentlemanly countenance of him she addressed into a forgetfulness of his being so utter a stranger, she spoke of the manner in which she guessed she had lost it, adding how its intrinsic value was enhanced in her eyes, from the circumstance of its being the gift of a much-loved friend.

"Yes," said Edwin, our dear cousin Ju—"Hush, hush!" interrupted Evelyn quickly, in a moment recollecting she was in a measure infringing the strict incognito her father had required of them; and again repeating her thanks, she took her brother's hand and pursued her course homewards.

Long did the stranger pause, and look after these two young beings, whom chance had brought so immediately to his notice! On finding the beautiful little watch, his first impulse had been a kind wish to seek the loser; a second thought told him the most effectual means for the purpose, would be to remain near the place where it had been dropped, until some one might pass, whom he could send for a servant to take his post. The amiable and considerate plan succeeded as we have just related, and

The result more than repaid him for the trouble his kind feelings had induced him to undertake.

He had lived long and much in the world, his saturated eyes had dwelt on every description of beauty; and beauty had by him, at one time, been worshipped and adored wherever he had found it enshrined; but at this moment he acknowledged to himself, that he had never been so moved, as by the contemplation of the brother and sister who had just left him. Their two lovely faces formed, as it were, in the same mould—the infantine beauty of the boy—the feminine grace of the girl—her dignified though natural manners—marked at once with high breeding and virtue, left an impression of admiration, that recalled the vivid feelings of past years.

“They come of no common parentage,” apostrophized the stranger, as he stood lost in thought, revolving in his mind the apparent inconsistency of a girl of distinguished beauty and manners being suffered to be unattended in a public walk, which, though it was late in the London season, was sufficiently thro’-ged to be unpleasant for her—he also wondered at the strange contrast offered by the childish abandon of her manner, and the evident desire for concealment, by her large cloak, and thick veil, and her hasty interruption of her brother’s ingenuous remarks. “Who, or what can they be?” he muttered, as he turned to pursue his walk. He returned to his splendid home; and often during the day, even when the engrossing business of a statesman, and the occupations of one high in office, filled each passing hour, did the vision of these fair children flit before his mind, and cling to his imagination with a tenacity which surprised himself.

Whether it was by accident, or intention, she knew not, neither did her thoughts dwell at all on the subject; but after this, Evelyn very frequently encountered the stranger, in the early walks which she made a point of taking with the children, every morning. He generally recognized his young acquaintances with a bow, but that was all; until one day, after a week had passed, during which she had been unable to attend her little charges in the Park, on again resuming her walks, Evelyn was surprised to see little Edwin, at a distant glimpse of the stranger, bound to meet him, exclaiming, “Oh! here comes that dear, kind man.” It then appeared that, when walking with Rachael only, the stranger had repeatedly spoken to the attractive little fellow, and their acquaintance had nearly reached to intimacy. Evelyn, though with something of an effort to her lively and frank disposition, met the inquiries of Edwin’s friend with a degree of reserve; still there was a benevolence, a tone of high breeding in his every word, with so much of kind interest, when listening to her account of the increased illness of the poor little baby, that soon dispelled every feeling of constraint, with the recollection of the unusual nature of their acquaintance. Evelyn, indeed, had too little knowledge of the world—at least, of the vicious part of it, to be aware of the extent of the risk encountered, by suffering the continuance of so irregular a proceeding, or the reflection it threw on her own sense of propriety.

Though reared amidst all the refinements of life, and early brought forward in the cultivated society of her father’s house, still, in heart and in ideas, Evelyn was as unsophisticated as the most genuine rustic could have been. This is no uncommon result of a careful education, and we may class it

among the happiest. It is not often that so sorrowful a reverse is experienced by the favorites of fortune, as to render a deeper knowledge of the world necessary. Wanting this, poor Evelyn conducted herself in the circumstances which accident had brought about, with the same *bonne foi* she would have shown, had her watch been picked up for her by some stranger in her mother’s drawing-rooms. She knew not, therefore, she could not think of harm; and happily, the simplicity which marked her behavior towards the stranger was, in that instance, in no danger of being misconstrued or imposed upon; on the contrary, the interviews which every morning’s walk seemed so naturally to occasion, while impressing her admiring hearer with an extraordinary interest for the intellect and cultivation of her mind, as well as the irresistible *naïveté* of her manners, also confirmed him in the belief that Evelyn had always lived in the best society, amongst persons of virtue and education. Still, that there was mystery was very evident. *It may* have added to the charm these youthful beings possessed, in the stranger’s eyes, and it *may not*; but it is certain, that although wishing strangely to penetrate this mystery, and feeling that by adroit and indirect questioning, the ingenuousness of his young friends would soon betray it; yet, withheld by a high and honorable feeling of delicacy, as well as a sense of their weakness, he forbore to probe their secret, and only allowed himself to guess when anything afforded him a clue for so doing.

Not aware of his gentlemanly forbearance in this particular, Evelyn, in their walks with this new-found acquaintance, had some difficulty in restraining Edwin, who would occasionally inadvertently say what she feared might give some insight into their family history; this she knew was what her father most strenuously wished them to avoid, in all their encounters with strangers or acquaintances. She thought the stranger must wish to learn their name, and she was sorry it was not in her power to disclose it; and with an innate dislike to deception, she felt averse to let him hear the name of Norton, which was that which their parent’s strong motive for concealment had induced them to assume; as it was, Evelyn and Edwin was all he knew of their distinguishing appellations. Their whole secret was, however, at one time, very nearly divulged, by the giddiness of the little chattering Edwin. A carriage, bearing a coronet, passed them one morning, in one of their early promenades in the Park; and, packed for travelling, was evidently on its departure from London. Evelyn thought she knew the carriage, and her heart beat with emotion; but she was silent. Edwin, less cautious, exclaimed, “O Evelyn! there goes my uncle Clairville’s carriage.”

“Whose did you say?” their companion, as it were, involuntarily uttered, turning quickly round to examine the equipage, which, however, had whirled rapidly away.

Evelyn looked reprovingly at Edwin, who stopping short made no answer; and the gentleman, perceiving their confusion, forbore to press the question, and changed the subject; and seeing by Evelyn’s perturbation and charging color, that she was agitated, soon wished them adieu.

He had scarcely quitted them when the tears flowed fast from poor Evelyn’s eyes; she had never before even caught a glimpse of former friends in

the obscurity in which they now lived, and this passing glance brought a pang to her heart which seemed to make her feel more acutely all the desolation of their situation.

The impression lasted nearly the whole day, and while nursing the poor little suffering Rose, often and often did the image of the travelling carriage pass over her mind, and with it the thoughts, that doubtless it held her two dear cousins, Julian and the lady de Cressy, journeying in their happiness to Lord Clairville's country house, where, she knew by experience, pleasure was courted in every possible form. The question rose to her sorrowing heart, "Do these dear friends still think of their unfortunate relatives? or has the coldness and cruelty of Lady Clairville taught them to consider us disgraced, and to shrink from our remembrance?" Her own knowledge of the warm-hearted Julian and Blanche, seemed to forbid the surmise, and with a sigh and a foreboding guess at futurity, she wondered how all this wretchedness would end.

CHAPTER VII.

"Love knoweth every form of air,
And every shape of earth,
And comes unbidden everywhere,
Like thought's mysterious birth."

THERE are few situations more conducive to enjoyment and sociability than a country house in England, particularly at that season of the year when the prospect of field sports, and the attractions of *la vie du château*, bring together an assemblage of both sexes, determined on giving and receiving pleasure.

It was in the latter days of August, a month so lovely in this country, that a brilliant and numerous party were assembled at Oakwood, the splendid seat of Lord Clairville. All was delight and excitement. Archery, pic-nics, races, and cricket-matches were by turns the chosen objects and promoters of pleasure; while the near approach of the first of September gave an interest to each passing day, that any who have witnessed the assumed or natural *engouement* of our English denizens for field sports, may well imagine. But, alas! for the uninitiated—it cannot be described. Who can recount conversations where Mantons and Macintoshes, pointers and percuSSIONS, setters and spatterdashies, are the mystical words for ever intervening? Who can describe the impassioned gesture, the glowing cheeks, and glittering eyes accompanying the relation of some past deed in preserve or moor, by "flood or fell?" Still, however, the importance attached to these matters bears with it something of infection, and when we hear of foreigners with no other shooting dress than tight morocco boots and chafy trowsers, and owning moreover a perfect ignorance of all the private mysteries of a double-barrelled gun, being inoculated with this *manie de chasse*, we may not wonder at the universal and overwhelming fever that predominates on the first of September with our own natives, who have taken it naturally.

Yet in truth it must be said there is scarcely a more pleasing sight, particularly in these days of luxury and self-indulgence, than that of a young man, who in London is a complete *petit maître*, devoted to every description of false and effeminate pleasure, discarding all his frippery; and in his shooting jacket, thick shoes, and rough gaiters,

walking forth as sturdily into the stubble field or tangled coppice, as if his feet had never trod the carpeted saloons of Crockford's, or he had ever breathed the perfumed air of a boudoir or opera box. We may suppose this excessive fondness for the sports of the field, among the higher classes of the English, has at least a salutary effect on the national character; inasmuch as the manliness it inculcates and encourages one half of the year, is a powerful counterbalance to the enervating and trivial pursuits of the other. This may partially account for some peculiar characteristics of those whom we may call *par excellence* English gentlemen; I mean that union of personal elegance with a hardihood and contempt of fatigue, not exceeded by the poorest laborer, a robustness of frame with extreme delicacy of idea, and a deep insight into the Sybarite's science of good living and luxurious enjoyment, with the simple manners and healthful constitution of a peasant.

There is certainly no other nation of which the most influential part pass so much of their time in the country, or pursue so eagerly the invigorating recreations it affords: this we may infer, while it gives a healthy tone of mind, and manliness of spirit and demeanor, in a great measure counteracts the baleful influence of the follies and dissipations of a town life. Indeed, there is something of purity in the happiness connected with a country life, that imparts its nature to the character; and when we observe that the profligate, the mercenary, or the malevolent, can rarely enter into the pleasure which is yielded by exercise in the pure and renovating air,—the rich prospect unfolding the illimitable beauties of creation,—or the tranquil study of nature in all her "cunning work,"—we may fairly conclude that the feelings which such things call so abundantly from the heart, are in themselves virtuous; and though the pallid senses may shrink from their participation, we cannot doubt their being the natural and genuine sources of enjoyment bestowed by a beneficent Creator, especially when we see them last long after, the factitious charms of the world have ceased to please.

A variety of motives had led to the assemblage of the gay party who now met beneath the hospitable roof of Oakwood, and though the ostensible one was pleasure, a deeper and more anxious reason had actuated its presiding genius. Lady Clairville had become most desirous of amusing, and by every means in her power conciliating her son Julian, whose gravity and dejection seemed to become each day more habitual, while there was a coldness in his demeanor towards herself which made his present ideas and opinions in a manner inaccessible.

By gathering at her house, the gay, the young, and the dissipated, the wily mother thought to make him forget former intimacies and connections, and by including in the party the all attractive Lady Florence St. John, and associating her in her schemes, she might win him from his childish fancy for Evelyn Cecil. It was thus she designated his deep and fervent attachment for his beautiful cousin.

Lady Florence St. John was as much renowned for her surpassing beauty as for her flirtations, and was exactly the person Lady Clairville wished should attract her son. Aware, as she was, that before his feelings could be awakened for Blanche, they must be detached from the present idol of his heart, she knew of no one so likely to effect her

purpose as Lady Florence, particularly as her views for the marriage of the young baroness and Julian would there encounter no obstacle; the co-operations of her Circe could but extend to an *affaire de cœur*, from the circumstance of her being a married woman. As far as regarded Blanche de Cressy, she had no fear of opposition to her wishes. She considered her too gentle to offer any contradiction to her will. Ignorant, moreover, of the deep interest Herbert Cecil had created in her heart, of which Julian was, in a measure, the promoter and confidant, she fully believed, from the many signs of confidence, and affection which she daily witnessed between them, that the high-born girl was warmly attached to her son. Thus proving the truth of a remark of La Bruyère, who says—“*Il n'y a rien qui ressemble tant à l'amour, que ces liaisons que l'amour fait former.*”

Lady Florence St. John was the daughter of a needy Irish earl. Born and reared amidst the healthy wilds of Connaught, until the expanding beauties of her form told of coming womanhood, her education was there begun, but completed in Paris. When perfected in every grace and accomplishment, with exquisite loveliness of person that scarcely needed such adjuncts, she was “brought out,” as the phrase goes, at Rome, where she speedily became the cynosure of admiring eyes.

John St. John, Esq., of Marston Hall, in the county of Leicester, was the first who made it appear to her watchful father that the attractions of Florence had done more execution than merely securing her the eclat of having her hand sought for in the dance by contending cavaliers. Mr. St. John's tutor pronounced the Lady Florence's beauty more classical than the most exquisite statue in the *attelier* of Canova—her dress in the best taste—her manners more agreeable than those of any other girl in Rome; and that the husband of so lovely a creature would be more envied than the proprietor of the best hunter at Melton. The pupil thought he could show no higher sense of his tutor's judgment, than by requesting the learned gentleman to bear his proposals of marriage to the earl, her father. His lordship's consent to the affair was readily given, and Lady Florence congratulated on being about to espouse “fifteen thousand a-year,” before she exactly knew to which of her many admirers she had been affianced; but when made to understand that it was to the dull-looking young man who had got up some races on the Corso to please her, though he had scarcely ever uttered six words in her presence, she felt perfectly satisfied as to her father's arrangements. She had been brought up to “get married;” and when that desirable event was decided upon, she felt that the end of her exertions was accomplished, and that for the future she had only to trim her bark for pleasure, and not for affairs of commerce. It is true, that she would rather the “fifteen thousand a-year” had been lodged in the exchequer of a Captain Greville, who she knew loved her, and for whose sunny blue eye, and harmonious guitar she had certainly *un sentiment*; still, all that was nothing to the purpose; and when leaving the gay city of Paris, whither they had adjourned for the solemnization of the marriage, in the most exquisite English equipage that had ever entered the Barriers, she almost wondered at her own happiness in having married at seventeen, “fifteen thousand a-year.”

Considering that the “holy state” had been entered upon with no more emotion on her part than acquiescence to the will of her father, or on that of Mr. St. John, with deeper feelings than the calm sort of satisfaction with which he would have secured the most beautiful cameo in Rome, their marriage can scarcely be called an unhappy one. He proved an indulgent and kind husband, though indolent and devoid of the least symptom of sensibility. Satisfied that she was the best dressed woman in every circle they entered, he troubled himself very little as to the opinions or occupations of his wife, and the most serious remonstrance which ever passed his lips, was to inculcate the necessity of sending to Paris for her bonnets and shoes. Her obedience on this, and on every point of expenditure and taste, was perfectly satisfactory; her manners towards him were kind and considerate, and to crown all, she had made him the father of three lovely boys, whose picture by Chalons had been pronounced the most beautiful in the exhibition. What more could he desire? He never asked himself the question—we may therefore suppose him a contented man. Lady Florence, on her side, considered that she had little cause to quarrel with fortune. She enjoyed all the liberty of a single girl, with the impunity of a married woman, and although among her friends she might see husbands with more *impressment* and devotion in their manners, none could be so decidedly quiescent as Mr. St. John. She therefore took her course, amused herself in the way her education would lead one to suppose she would, and became, as was also a natural consummation,—*the fashion*. The world soon became her idol, admiration the food upon which she existed, and most plentifully was she supplied with this intoxicating sustenance, for few possessed stronger claims on the popularity of the world than herself. She possessed some good natural feelings; she loved her children with all the warmth of a mother's affection, and she was not insensible to sentiments of gratitude towards her husband for his indulgence and invariable kindness; these redeeming points in her character had hitherto saved her from glaring imprudence. But, alas! how soon the prospect of youth becomes overcast! how soon the desire of pleasure ushers in temptation! how soon are ministers of vice found to encourage and flatter the passions of the young, when this world is looked to as the only sphere of our existence, and self-gratification as our only law!

Although Lady Florence possessed qualities, which, if cultivated, might have considerably enhanced the value of her character: the trifling and superficial education she had received, together with the dissipation of the last years of her life, had considerably militated against those evidences of a better nature which had peeped forth in her early youth, when, wild as the scenery amidst which she wandered, and pure as the mountain lake which reflected the blooming child, she dreamt not of the follies and pleasures which now led her captive.

With all her better feelings smothered, and, though not actually criminal, with the bright surface of a woman's purity in some measure sullied, Lady Florence St. John arrived at Oakwood, the very agent the designs of Lady Clairville required, and the first day of her visit had scarcely passed, before Julian was marked out as the victim upon whom she intended to pour forth her enchantments.

Her intentions were by no means weakened on finding that the task of making him her slave would not be easy. Her captives were wont to sue for their chains, and when fettered, press them to their bosoms; she foresaw greater difficulty with Julian, and this discovery served to add zest to her schemes of subjugation.

There was yet a deeper motive which actuated the plans of the beautiful Florence, which, although not acknowledged to herself, was not the less powerful. Beauty, like a despot queen, has a quick and jealous eye for any aggression upon her ascendancy; and during the last season Lady Florence, in two instances, had suffered a defalcation of allies, owing to the gentle and unassuming, but newly presented Lady de Cressy. This called for vengeance. Although, not for an instant questioning the nature of the attraction which had won from her empire the homage of a Cabinet Minister and of a German prince, it was not less annoying to find that beauty, and all the seductions which she could so dexterously employ, might soon be superseded by the fascination of mere wealth.

As to the personal attractions of the young Baroness, they were too slight in the estimation of Lady Florence, to merit competition; she nevertheless felt that it behoved her to exhibit to her rival and to the world, which had quietly witnessed the apostasy of her two lovers, some signal victory as a demonstration of her supremacy. The opportunity now presented itself; Lady Florence had scarcely been two days at Oakwood, ere she fancied that she had discovered, in the tender and confiding manners of the Lady de Cressy to her cousin, the cause of her disregard of all the adorers which her peculiar situation had gathered around her, in London, and which had caused the rejection even of the Cabinet Minister and the German prince, her own most valued cavaliers.

The belief of *Blanche's* secret attachment did not surprise her; for as she was aware of Lady Clairville's wishes in that point, and had now the opportunity of observing the very superior nature of Julian's personal as well as intellectual qualities, it seemed the most natural thing in the world that this inexperienced girl should love her cousin. The reciprocity of the sentiment did not appear so clearly; and Lady Florence mentally resolved to do her *possible* to prevent its existence.

What triumph it would be to subdue that proud spirit, she thought one morning, as she sat gazing on the haughty brow and apathetic indifference, with which Julian listened to some chattering neighbor at the breakfast-table; what delight to call some glances of feeling from those deep, calm eyes; eyes which, to Lady Florence's great surprise, had as yet never to her knowledge rested for a minute on herself. But if that indifference piqued her, how doubly so did the smile which ever enlightened his countenance when *Blanche* addressed him; which, lasting only while she spoke, faded gradually away, leaving him grave and cold as he was before.

Though stung almost to anger by this unusual insensibility of her loveliness and attractions, Lady Florence, in spite of herself, conceived a deep interest for the handsome and stoical Julian. Here, therefore, when waging war against some vagrant heart, she had found that the less her own feelings were engaged, the more powerful were her measures;

therefore, in those schemes of conquest with which she had sought to fill that vacuum in her heart, which a marriage without affection and a life of dissipation had occasioned; she had rather hailed the apathy which in fact had proved her safe-guard. It was very different now; she could not conceal from herself that she had a double interest in the success of her fascinations. She had also some slight sense of the dangers with which her present pursuits were fraught; but with that recklessness which former impunity had given her, and the wilfulness of a spoiled child, she gave her every thought and attention to the unconscious Julian.

There was in truth much to admire in this new object of her notice; even the air of deep dejection which clouded his fine brow, made him more attractive to her feelings, as it rendered him so totally different from the young men with whom Lady Florence had been accustomed to find herself associated.

Surrounded as he was by all the pomp of wealth and rank, he appeared perfectly regardless of both; his manners were simple and unstudied, but gracefully imbued with a distinct tone of high breeding his whole bearing; indeed, was perfectly unaffected — yet, although he appeared scarcely conscious of the distinguished place he held in society, the evidences of a lofty spirit, and pride of another sort were clearly perceptible. Manly in his pursuits, and with a highly cultivated mind, his conversation, though he spoke little, was consistent with his attainments. Possessed of great goodness of heart, almost approaching to weakness, where his affections were concerned, it beamed in kindness from his eyes when they were illumined by a smile; at the same time, there was an occasional flash from those dark orbs which betrayed an impetuosity of feeling and exceeding warmth of temper; telling, also, of deep absorbing passion; and it was on this that Lady Florence founded her hopes of subjecting him to her dominion.

Julian was courteous and considerate to all his mother's guests; but it was evidently with an effort that he exerted himself to enter into the little interests of the passing hour; and he quickly relapsed into his usual absence of mind and deep reveries. This inaccessibility made him, perhaps, a still more attractive object of observation to a woman who had hitherto never encountered such indifference, but had always found herself the shrine at which the whole world,—that is, her world,—had ever worshipped.

It was with much satisfaction Lady Florence remarked, that the manners of Julian to his cousin, although those of a most affectionate brother, were nothing more. 'It is true; there was a bright smile on his lips when he looked upon her; and his attention to the minutest wishes she expressed, almost evinced the alacrity of a lover; but all was too open—too undisguised, for that feeling which generally seeks concealment. Still there was enough tenderness and confidence, apparently existing between them, to warrant some curiosity on the part of Lady Florence. She could perceive that he loved the gentle *Blanche* for her own sake: but there was a second feeling which puzzled her, unconscious as she was of a little secret in the heart of *Blanche* which corresponded too truly with that which burned within the bosom of Julian, not to render his cousin still more dear in his eyes.

"Time and watchfulness must fathom this mystery," thought Lady Florence, as she in vain sought an elucidation in her own mind. "I can fancy this girl-peeress loves her cousin; I can see, by her excessive vigilance when he speaks to me, she is a little jealous; but I am confident, his feelings towards her are purely those of a brother;—children brought up from infancy together, with a view to matrimony, seldom care much for each other. He knows he can marry her any day he chooses—therefore, why that degree of gloom upon his spirits? Can he love another?" The question struck like a barbed arrow to her heart; and even then the imprudent Florence shrunk not from the fearful consciousness, that she was suffering an interest to take possession of her, that, like too many of the same nature, begun in folly, *must end in tears.*

CHAPTER VIII.

His frame was slight, his forehead high,
And swept by threads of raven hair;
The fire of thought was in his eye,
And he was pale—

* * * * *

I watched his graceful step of pride,
And loved him ere the echo died.

HAD Lady Florence St. John, with all the worldliness and trifling inclinations of a woman of fashion, possessed at the same time the internal, as well as assumed apathy—the usual characteristic of the class to which she belonged—her present pursuit would have been one of little peril to herself. If merely an affair of rivalry, it would have affected her only as her supremacy was proved or set aside; and Julian, won from his allegiance to the Baroness, would have been a thing of nought, except as the spoil gathered from a rival power. But, alas! for Lady Florence, there was a deep well-spring of tenderness in her heart, which was not the less plenteous because till now it had remained hidden and untouched. Although she deluded herself with the belief that she merely sought amusement by her plans, and was only acting up to foregone jesting assertions, that there was no offering more flattering or touching than *les promesses d'un jeune cœur*—there was a wilder and more unhallowed incentive in her bosom, which threatened to inflict misery on all concerned.

At times, fearing that some deep and absorbing passion could alone have subdued a mind and spirit such as Julian's, Lady Florence thought it possible she might gain some elucidation of the mystery from Lady Clairville herself, who, she was quick-sighted enough to perceive, regarded him frequently with a furtive, but anxious scrutiny, as though all was not quite as she wished.

The opportunity of some private conversation soon presented itself; for although the claims of Lady Clairville's numerous guests precluded everything in the shape of a *tele-a-tele* during the morning, the impatient Florence eagerly seized the occasion afforded by her hostess one evening; who, on the plea of a headache retired to a couch in a distant corner of the saloon, immediately on quitting the dining-room.

Thither Lady Florence followed her; and seating herself by her side, in the most soothing, bewitching manner, bathed her temples with *Eau de Cologne*, alternately and gently fanning them. At length she commenced her attack upon the "secret of the prison-house."

"Dear Lady Clairville, how very lovely you look! and how like your handsome son, now that you are a little pale, and I have drawn your hair from shading your splendid forehead!"

There was more truth in these words than usually exists in the compliments of one female to another; and the admiration with which Lady Florence gazed on the beautiful face before her was unfeigned, though perhaps, derived from a second feeling.

"Shall I tell you a secret?" she continued, half playfully—half seriously. "Do you know, Lady Clairville, that I am almost in love with that beautiful, grave, cross-looking Julian of yours! Not that I have spoken twenty words to him, or that I have heard him speak half the number; but still there is something intensely interesting in his melancholy woe-begone appearance."

"That is exactly what provokes me beyond the power of endurance," exclaimed Lady Clairville, rising from her recumbent posture, and forgetting in a moment, as it were, her previous headache and interesting languor. "I am deeply annoyed at his absurd melancholy which you admire; and the cause from whence it springs disturbs me still more. Indeed, I have much wished to talk with you on the subject; for I am sure, you will sympathize in my irritated feelings, and perhaps assist me, sweet Lady Florence, to reform this wayward boy. But you cannot judge of my disappointment, dearest, until I tell you the real state of the case."

Lady Florence actually trembled with emotion and curiosity, at once dreading to hear the announcement of some deeply-rooted passion that had taken possession of Julian; yet rejoicing in the confidence and friendly familiarity of his mother, she listened with mute attention as Lady Clairville vehemently continued the relation of her grievances.

"The truth is, my dear Lady Florence, that I,—that is, Lord Clairville and myself, have intended my niece, Blanche de Cressy, for this perverse Julian, from their earliest youth. You know what a *partie* she is—imagine the agony of my mind, when I tell you that this absurd ungrateful son pertinaciously refuses it; and for what, your good sense and knowledge of the world will never divine—it is for no less an absurdity, than because he indulges in the ridiculous fancy that he is in love with another. The idea of a person in his station of life imagining for a moment that love is as necessary in marriage as in a melo-drama!"

"But who is the object of this folly?" asked Lady Florence, with an eagerness which, to one less preoccupied than Lady Clairville, would have betrayed more interest than she could have hoped so soon to have created by her words.

"Oh! you certainly know my unfortunate brother, and his family—indeed I fancied you knew the girl."

"Do you mean that beautiful Evelyn?" exclaimed Lady Florence: "then I indeed know the rest. She is in truth a lovely creature," she added, half in soliloquy; and, while remembering her form of virgin purity and beauty, she sighed; whether from dread of her power, or from the consciousness of the evil she would herself inflict on so fair a creature, we cannot say.

"Lovely!" repeated Lady Clairville, with indignation and surprise: "and what does that weigh in the scale with riches and rank? Blanche is also good-looking; at least, sufficiently so."

"But is Lady de Cressy attached to her cousin?"

"Oh! of course she must be. I have never directly put the question to her; but there can be no doubt upon the subject: she knows my wishes, and has been properly brought up under my direction. I consider it one of the first proofs of a right education, for a girl to be ready to marry the person her friends point out for her choice. In my opinion, it is a mark of under breeding and vulgarity for a girl to fall in love. It is so like the *soubrette* of a theatre, or a lady's-maid, who hangs herself, because a gentleman's gentleman does not return her passion. The very idea is repugnant to my notions of delicacy."

Lady Florence turned away to hide the smile she could not suppress; but said, with her usual soft mild voice, "Indeed, dear Lady Clairville, I am quite distressed for you; but what is to be done?"

"My lovely young friend," Lady Clairville replied, impressively laying her hand upon the beautiful little white one, which rested trembling on the couch; "you can do everything for me in this sad affair. There is but one course to pursue. Julian has seen very little of the world, and has mixed but slightly in female society. Do you endeavour to gain his confidence; once possessed of it, your fascinating words may charm him from his folly. Who could ever resist your persuasions, accompanied by the eloquence of those dove-like eyes! Besides this, when Julian is once sensible of your beauty, your manners, your attractions, he will then discover what loveliness really is. O Lady Florence, if you could wean him from this silly girl, what would be my gratitude and joy! You would be dearer to my heart than even you are now."

At this moment the conversation, which was becoming so highly interesting to both, was suddenly interrupted by the entrance of the gentlemen from the dining-room, and the approach of some to the couch on which Lady Clairville was seated. Enough had been said, however, to make Lady Florence understand the nature of services required of her, and to develop the faulty character of the mother, who, with a fearful absence of principle, did not hesitate, for the sake of attaining one point, to throw her son into the midst of the most dangerous temptations; nor to enlist as her ally, a young woman, unstable in conduct, and who, with supposed laxity, if not licentiousness of principle, entered into all the dissipations of the world, apparently without religion to restrain her, or friends to admonish. It is true, she still bore in society an unspersed name; but by a constant series of dissipated habits, the heart is as thoroughly corrupted, as by the actual commission of crime. Indulgence gives the feelings strength, while the absence of glaring guilt may seemingly justify the want of restraint; and thus, unawakened by remorse, a woman may proceed, until by gradual and stealthy steps, the destruction of all morality is achieved.

How insufficient is prosperity for happiness! Even at its very height, a single disappointment can destroy the relish of all its pleasures. Lady Clairville, though surrounded by luxury, power, and opulence, was at this moment stung by discontent, and her bosom filled with feelings of outraged pride and resentment.

We may assemble all the evils with which the world abounds, and their stings will be found less poignant than those which opposition offers to pride, and to an overbearing spirit. Amidst the ordinary calamities with which humanity is afflicted, the well-

disciplined mind feels consolation in the reflection that they come direct from a higher Power, and that with the affliction, strength is also bestowed; but where those disorders of an ill-regulated and overweening disposition exist, every contrariety to its will or pleasure seems to attack human nature in its "strong hold;" and penetrating to the very seat of sensation, converts all the powers of thought into instruments of torture.

Lady Florence was deeply moved by the preceding conversation; and while musing intently on all its particulars, she saw Julian enter the room. But he sought her not,—her surpassing beauty had as yet made no impression upon his pre-occupied mind. Her lip curled with mortified vanity, when she thought of her disregarded loveliness, and her manners partaking of the angry nature of her feelings, were cold and repulsive to the little circle that surrounded her.

With all her besetting frailties, however, the heart of Lady Florence was naturally warm and kind,—many good impulses lay crushed beneath the weight of vanity and folly, while her better nature would often struggle to free itself from the fetters of vicious indulgence, and an inward voice upbraid her for the idleness, luxury, and dissipation of her mode of life. At this moment, when her eye fell upon the countenance of Julian, she could not help confessing to herself that the passion of love, nursed as it was in his young heart, assumed a dignity and purity of character, with which she had not been in the habit of investing it. She recollected perfectly the Evelyn of his affections, whom she had often seen and admired; and she thought of the difference in the character of this unsophisticated and child-like girl, with her own artificial and meretricious nature, until she mentally confessed that such angelic purity seemed formed for the noble and refined Julian.

While these ideas were passing through the mind of Lady Florence, her better angel hovered near her heart. She would not—she could not be the tool of such a worldly-minded heartless woman as Lady Clairville. And yet to gain the confidence and friendship of Julian! She was not aware while thus deeply engaged in conflicting thoughts, how fixedly her gaze was riveted upon the subject of her meditation. Her beautiful eyes, softened by the feelings which were passing in her mind, were intently turned upon him with melting sweetness. Julian could not but be aware of the influence of her gaze, for he was quite near her, having come to the sofa upon which his mother, still rested, to inquire after her headache. A deep blush spread itself over his countenance, and her soft cheek soon caught the infection. For an instant even she, the finished votary of the world, felt totally abashed.

It would be contrary to nature if we were to affirm that such glances—from eyes so beautiful—did not have some effect upon Julian. They expressed such unqualified admiration and interest, that he must indeed have been insensibility itself, had he not felt flattered and softened by the involuntary homage.

This Lady Florence's quick penetration soon discovered, and the demon of coquetry speedily re-assuming its empire over her actions, she immediately engaged the object of her fascinating gaze in conversation.

"Mr. Sinclair, you must have thought me very rude just now, to stare at you so unmercifully; but

I was endeavouring to make out a likeness which has tormented me ever since I came here, and I have only just discovered it."

There was an every-day tone in these words which contrasted rather oddly with the deep look of sensibility which had first attracted Julian's attention; but it was Lady Florence's favorite system of warfare to commence with *des choses banales*. Perhaps there was something of disappointment that prompted the manner in which Julian coldly inquired—

"And pray may I ask your ladyship to whom I can claim resemblance?"

"I believe the person I mean is a cousin of yours. I allude to a very young man of the name of Cecil, Herbert Cecil, I think he is called."

Julian bowed; but the name fell so suddenly upon his ear, that he again colored deeply, and was silent.

Apparently without perceiving this slight embarrassment, but determined to probe him to the utmost, in order that she might exactly ascertain the state of his feelings and act accordingly, Lady Florence continued.

"By the way, what a lovely family the Cecils are!

I used to meet them very often last year in the country, at my aunt's, Lady Kingsborough. The eldest girl promised to be a perfect beauty; and as for that dark-eyed youth, I was positively fascinated by him; so I trust, Mr. Sinclair," she added, looking with arch sweetness at her now most attentive listener, "that you will not consider yourself injured by the comparison."

Again was the pale cheek of Julian flushed with the "stranger crimson," and his heart beat high, and again he could only bow.

Lady Florence, still in pretended ignorance of his feelings, proceeded, uninterrupted by his evident emotion.

"I used particularly to admire the contrast between the young people, so unlike, and yet both so handsome in their peculiar style of beauty. They were an interesting family altogether; the mother so fragile and yet so lovely; and that noble, open-hearted, generous-looking man,—the father, there again was a striking contrast. He the sturdy oak, she the tender ivy clinging round it for support. I was grieved, most grieved to hear of their distress," she continued, appearing for the first time to remark Julian's discomposure; "you must pardon me, Mr. Sinclair, for I see the subject distresses you, but the peculiar interest which I take in it must plead my excuse for so inadvertently alluding to it," and Lady Florence for the first time looked most lovely in Julian's eyes, whilst she moulded her handsome and expressive countenance into an air of the most tender sympathy.

She had indeed struck the right chord; its harmony vibrated to his heart, and the impression was durable. He merely answered, "My uncle and his family are very dear to me." He feared trusting his voice to say more, and rising abruptly, walked towards the piano forte where Blanche was standing apparently selecting some music, but in fact, in silent observance of himself and Lady Florence.

The latter experienced a poignant sensation of pique at this act of Julian's, and for the moment she thought her first supposition respecting the attachment of these two cousins was more accurate than the details she had first heard from Lady Clairville. The idea only gave a deeper interest to her schemes

of captivation, and she turned to join Blanche and her cousin at the piano forte, but found her surmises of their extreme intimacy rather more strongly corroborated than she expected, by perceiving that both had left the room.

The truth was that Julian, on approaching Blanche, had whispered to her with all a brother's affection:—

"My sweet cousin, you look so *triste* that a walk by moonlight is indispensable; this hot noisy room must be annoying to you; besides, I have not had a word with you the whole day. Come with me through the conservatory."

The young baroness gladly accompanied him, for more *enviee* than himself to the wiles of Lady Florence, she had witnessed with anxiety the emotion depicted on his countenance during their late conversation; and while walking with him on the fine terrace in the front of the mansion, she reflected whether it would not be well to put him on his guard against her fascinations. She thought it was a duty she owed her beloved Evelyn; yet feared by bringing Lady Florence more to his notice, that she might in fact be furthering her views. However, the pleasure Julian seemed to experience in their moon-lit walk, speedily removed her doubts. He spoke so affectionately of Evelyn, so slightly of Lady Florence, whose words he repeated, and seemed so completely to have his every feeling calmed by the lovely scene around them, that Blanche forgot her anxieties.

It was a lovely night indeed, although in the month of September. The air was mild and clear, and the moon in full splendor illumined the whole of the splendid landscape which surrounded them.

There is an eventide in the day, an hour when the sun retires, and the shadows fall, and when nature assumes the appearance of soberness and silence. It is an hour which in all ages the good have loved, as bringing with it sentiments and affections more valuable than all the splendour of the day. Its first impression is to still all the turbulence of thought or passion, which the day may have brought forth. When all is silent around us, we feel a kindred stillness breathe upon our souls, and calm them from the agitations of society. In the day we live with men, in the eventide we begin to live with nature. We see the world withdrawn from us, the shades of night darken over the habitations of men, and we feel ourselves alone. It is an hour fitted to still, but with a gentle hand, the throb of every unruly passion, and to waken in our hearts those pure affections which the glare of the day may have dissolved. While the shades of night darker upon our dwellings, the splendors of the firmament come forward to our view. Heaven opens to our eyes the radiance of a sublimer being, and while we forget for a time the obscurity of earthly concerns, we feel that there are "yet greater things than these."

The cousins walked long in silence; both felt how soothing were the subdued beauties of the scene, after the glare and noisy hum of the rooms they had left. They had long been in the habit of walking at that quiet hour, and talking of those they loved, and wishing for their presence. Lady Clairville had never offered opposition to what she styled, "these propitious *tetes-a-tetes*," but, as in the present instance, the hour supposed to be occupied by the tender conversation of lovers, was in fact passed in the confidential discourse of brother and sister.

"Blanche," said Julian, at length interrupting a reverie into which his cousin had fallen, "do you recollect how, even as children, we used to love to walk on this terrace, on such nights as these, with our poor cousins, when all was hope, and happy and allowed affection? Do you not remember also our making the engagement, that when far away from each other we would still meet in thought upon the recurrence of each full moon? I wonder whether they have forgotten this promise, made in our days of happiness? I have not, but my heart actually sickens when I reflect what may be the feelings which the remembrance excites in them. Blanche, tell me, do you think the cruel conduct of my mother has at all implicated us in this horrible neglect of our suffering friends? Do they, can they know that it is our ignorance of the asylum they have chosen, that has kept us from them? O dear Blanche, you cannot imagine what this idea at times makes me endure, or what I suffer from the suspense of not knowing what has become of them! It preys upon my spirits, disturbs my rest; in short, is destroying me."

"Julian," replied Blanche, almost weeping at the evident distress of her cousin's mind, "I enter into all your feelings most truly. You know full well how dearly I also prize these beloved Cecils; therefore I suffer equally with yourself. What is to be done I cannot imagine. My aunt will never assist us in this sad affair, and I am most sorry to tell you, dear Julian, that this very morning she has again talked to me upon the old subject of our marriage. Pain would I have told her how differently both our hearts were fixed; but you know how much I fear your mother, and I was silent, although I struggled for courage to say what might put the subject to rest for ever."

"Dear Blanche," said Julian sorrowfully, "how much I regret your timidity on this point, when you can show so much firmness on matters of infinitely less importance! Is it the violence of my mother's manner which intimidates you?"

"Oh yes," said Blanche, almost shuddering at the bare idea; "knowing how long her hopes have been fixed upon uniting us, and having witnessed so often how opposition to her least wish raises all the angry imperious feelings of her nature; how could I, Julian, alone stand the brunt of her wrath and indignation, on finding we dared to disappoint her dearest hope?"

Julian sighed, feeling that even he, with all his mother's high and overbearing disposition, should almost tremble at her anger when she should first learn that they dared to oppose her will. Therefore, though he ardently wished it, could he expect Blanche to be the first to tell her how completely they had resolved to disobey her wishes?

"I believe we must leave it to accident to discover our real feelings," Julian replied, after a few minutes silence; "but what was it, Blanche, that my mother said to you this morning? I had almost hoped that in her anxiety for what she calls proper attention on my part to this beautiful Lady Florence, she had forgotten that I have a hand or heart to dispose of."

"Oh, no!" Blanche replied, "after some general remarks on the absurdity of boyish fancies and affections—which I perfectly understood were intended to do away from my mind any impression that you loved my cousin better than myself—Lady Clairville told me that as you were now of age, there was nothing to prevent our union taking place

immediately; and, that as soon as the present party should break up, she intended to have it formally announced to all the members of our family, and to commence every preparation for it."

"By heavens! she shall not make such a puppet of me," Julian exclaimed with a vehemence, which startled his cousin; "I know, through the unhappy weakness of my father, she has the power of making me a beggar, if I do not marry according to her wishes, but so let it be: I can sacrifice wealth, but never, never my affections." "Blanche," he continued, in a calmer tone, "we understand each other so perfectly, that I am not fearful of offending you, by thus shrinking from a marriage planned with such mercenary feelings. You know how truly I love you, and I rejoice in feeling convinced that no sister ever more kindly prized a brother than you do me; but whatever may be the consequences, my mother must be told in what light we view each other, and why she can never hope to see a tenderer affection between us. This may ruin me," he continued, seeing Blanche wished to interrupt him, "but with you, dear cousin, it is very different. You cannot be hurt by any disclosure; for remember that in two short years you will be independent of every one. O Blanche! why do you not at once boldly avow your affection for the noble Herbert? You ought to glory in your preference for so excellent, so manly a creature. Why suffer the tyranny of my mother thus to fetter your actions? Is it that you doubt the constancy of your own sentiments, for one in obscurity and poverty?"

"Oh! no, no, Julian—the very supposition is a cruelty and injustice to my feelings," Blanche replied anxiously; "had Herbert but openly sought me, I should, as you say, glory to avow my preference for him. But you forget, Julian, that as yet we only suspect his love: and although we may know and appreciate the feelings of delicacy, which withhold him from seeking to attach one who is his superior in the worldly distinctions of rank and fortune, still that knowledge would not exculpate me from the charge of unfeminine conduct, were I to confess an attachment for one who had never sought the avowal from my lips. Oh! no, no, Julian, I must be silent until Herbert speaks of the love, which it is now my only happiness to think he cherishes for me."

Julian felt that she was right; and when he thought of the adulation which on all sides surrounded her, and the high and fastidious notions of honor entertained by Herbert, who had his full share of the Cecil pride, he sighed with the consciousness, that even now it was possible their young affections might be blighted in the bud. The idea gave him pain; for he believed Herbert to be all that was excellent, and well deserving the prosperity which a union with the wealthy Blanche de Cressy would insure to him. He was for some moments silent; at last he said kindly, though seriously—

"Blanche, your immense fortune and influence, to say nothing of your attractions, place you in a very peculiar position. You are courted on all sides by rank, by talent, and by everything that is fascinating to woman. Can you withstand all this, and give it all up for the ruined Herbert Cecil? At this moment, and in this house, there are three men, who, were it not for the supposition of your engagement to me, are ready to throw themselves at your feet. Coronets are at your disposal; nay, a Scottish dukedom only waits a smile from you, to sue for an union

with your fair English barony. Tell me, Blanche, will not reflection and time bring with them any change in your feelings?"

"I do reflect," said Blanche, in a firm voice, "and every thought—every remembrance, only impresses more vividly on my heart, the image of one whose perfections appear to me so great, that I shall feel more honored by being known as the object of his affections, than by all the worldly wooing, you so unkindly suppose can have sway with me. Dear Herbert!" she continued enthusiastically, and as if thinking aloud—"to suppose that such mercenary flatterers could ever rival you in my heart! You, whom nature has formed so good, so excellent, and endowed so amply with beauties both of mind and person. Nay, Julian, do not smile—do not think I have said too much. I do not love him for his beauty, but look upon it with admiration, as bearing the impress of his noble mind. Am I wrong, Julian, in thus so completely avowing my affection for Herbert? Alas! it is this moonlight that has made me so bold, and yet it has also made me very sad;" and Blanche turned away in tears.

"Sweet cousin!" Julian replied, affectionately taking her hand; "I delight in hearing you thus own a sentiment so good, so purely disinterested. Fortunate girl, how I envy you! What happiness is your portion! A very short time will render you mistress of your own actions, and at liberty to place in the situation to which his birth and merit entitle him, one whose love and affection will amply repay all you can bestow upon him. Through your means, Blanche, talent and virtue will be led into the road of honor and independence, and society will regain a bright and valuable ornament. Happy, happy Blanche—how different is my lot!"

At this moment, a large party, at the instigation of Lady Florence, who wondered with impatience at the protracted absence of the cousins, issued from the house, and Julian and Blanche were no longer alone.

CHAPTER IX.

She was calm in the meekness of a heart
Resting on God, and held the fair young child
Upon her bosom, with its gentle eyes
Folded in sleep, as if its soul had gone
To whisper the baptismal vow in heaven.

Her lips moved silently, and tears, fast tears,
Stole from beneath her lashes, and upon
The forehead of the suffering child lay soft."

On a sofa in a small bedroom, supported by cushions, was extended the emaciated form of Mrs. Cecil, pale and suffering; she looked the very spectre of her former self.

Herbert was seated close to the couch of his mother; he too was paler than ever, while his countenance exhibited a deeper and more settled melancholy than was usual to it. Clapsed in his own, he held one of his mother's attenuated trembling hands; and in the other rested the book from which he had been reading. That volume was the Bible!

"Herbert," said his mother, "these are indeed sad hours of trial; but it is here that patience and submission must be exercised. How much comfort I have derived from that beautiful psalm you have just read to me! 'If I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there also shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.' Beyond the uttermost sea. It is

there that thou art, my husband," she continued as though thinking aloud; "but there too is our God—and there does his hand uphold thee! My dearest child," she again said, after a pause, "resignation is one of the most difficult, and at the same time the most consoling duties of a Christian. These wretched days of separation from your father, are moments of affliction which call upon me to recollect that *I am tried*; and that even the most innocent and virtuous love should be subservient to the will of God. Perhaps this love has hitherto absorbed too much my faculties, keeping me too far from God. Alas! now in my bitter hours of anguish, the days of my past existence pass in retrospect before my eyes, and self-reproach marks each period."

Herbert, fearful that his mother would suffer from the highly-wrought state of her feelings, endeavored to check this burst of emotion, but in vain.

"My kind—my good and excellent husband," continued Mrs. Cecil, "why did you permit me to continue in a careless happy state of self-indulgence? Why did you not confide in me? What pride and triumph it would have been to have proved by my actions, that I loved him exclusively for himself! I would have been his stay and solace in his difficulties, tenderly supporting his drooping spirits, and assisting him with my poor advice; but now it is all too late. *He is gone*; and these three words comprehend the dreadful extent of my misfortune. Gone in lowliness and misery, to drag on his wretched existence far from his wife,—his children. But if it please the Almighty to send affliction, let me endeavor to suffer humbly. Could I but bring my mind to turn my sufferings into blessings, by my manner of receiving and supporting them! though stretched upon a bed of sickness, if my soul rest upon God with hope and resignation, then death would be a welcome release, and a happy admission to the presence of our heavenly Father, who will wipe all tears from our eyes; from whose sight sorrow and sighing flee away—in whose presence is the fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for ever more."

It was thus, half in meditation, half in utterance, that the poor mother would pursue the thoughts brought in mercy to her mind by the soothing words which were read to her by her son; and Herbert felt that it was the only consolation she could derive, under the present wretched aspect of their affairs. No ray of comfort beamed from this world; but from the next, what joy, what peace! for his beloved parent. Her mind was so heaven-ward bound—so pure, so good, that in her case, "to die" would indeed "be gain."

Herbert's ideas of religion partook of the solemn and heightened enthusiasm of his nature; and he knew that a deep conviction of its healing influence could alone calm the torture of his mother's mind, which was also dreadfully subdued by bodily suffering.

With never-failing patience, did this touching and bright example of filial excellence sit for hours by the couch of the poor sufferer; and as if inspired by the Almighty, words of comfort and piety flowed from his youthful lips, which soothed her fainting spirits.

He allowed her to speak of the probability of her approaching death, and assisted her in arranging all their worldly plans, in case this dreadful calamity should indeed occur. It tortured his affectionate

heart to hear a mother, so fondly beloved, speak with almost certainty of an event so afflicting; but seeing that it was a relief to her excited mind, (which to keep tranquil was their most anxious care,) he stifled all he felt; and with a steady hand, though sinking heart, wrote down all her directions. He had the comfort of seeing, that when all these arrangements were over, she resigned herself in meek submission to her lot, waiting patiently for her appointed hour of trial, endeavoring to wean her mind, in some degree, from the endearing ties which bound her to this life, and striving to fix her thoughts on God alone. But with such ties, how difficult is the task! A husband in existence, fondly and devotedly beloved—and such sweet children to leave, all at an age when the mother's care is most wanting. Under such circumstances, it is indeed hard to die: at least so it must be thought, until the mind is brought into that state which enables us to feel that "God will provide,"—that He will be a father to the orphan children,—that with His unfailling mercy, He will support the spirits of those we love best on earth, if we trust implicitly on His word, and to His aid. Then, indeed, may we leave all safely in His hands. He will visit the house of sorrow, and be near to the broken and bruised heart; for is He not the "Father of mercies and God of all comfort?"

It may be thought extraordinary, that, amongst all the influential connections of the Cecil family, there was no one to whom they might apply in this present hour of calamity. There were many who called themselves their friends,—some among them might perhaps have been found kind and ready to assist; but Captain Cecil, having applied to his nearest, and we should have imagined, dearest relative, and she deserting and reproaching him in his hour of need, added fuel to the fire of a distracted and proud mind; and he felt averse to incur fresh insults upon himself and family, by making his situation known to other friends. There was also the stinging shaft of self-reproach to withhold him, by the reflection that all must consider that he had brought these difficulties upon himself and family by his want of common prudence. Thus, although the Cecils at one time owned rich and powerful friends, they were as nothing to them now; indeed, how few in adversity find consolation in those who in prosperity have been "their dearest and their best!"

Much has been said upon the hollowness of worldly friendships; but we scarcely credit what we hear, until the truth is taught by sad experience. There is something in sorrow from which the gay and the joyful shrink. The contrast between the sick chamber and the banqueting-room is too great to be endured. The sigh of grief, and the laughter of mirth, blend most inharmoniously together; amidst a life of tumultuous gaiety, or busy trifling, the best affections are crushed; while coldness and selfishness usurp the place of those feelings which would lead us to "bear one another's burthens." But, as far as regards pecuniary aid, few, even should they possess the wish, can command the means.

It is now generally the system, to live to the utmost extent of income. Luxury has so completely crept into our habits, that with every additional hundred we add a fresh indulgence. Spending all for enjoyment, we have no resources left to serve a fellow creature, beyond the trifling contributions of the day to the utterly destitute. We comfort our consciences by our own interpretation of the homely

proverb, "Charity begins at home;" and think we are doing a great deal by circulating money, and employing tradespeople. He who is blessed with the means, and—what is of far more consequence—the disposition to be benevolent, has abundant reason to be thankful to the Author of all good, for the measure he has bestowed on him. Prosperity is redoubled to a good man by his generous use of it; being in a measure reflected back upon him by every one whom he makes happy.

The Cecils felt that all that remained to them, at the present juncture of poverty and sorrow, was to hide their disgrace and misfortunes, and in obscurity work through contending difficulties, trusting in no other aid than Providence. They felt truly, that although the hand of affection and real friendship imparts inestimable value to the most trifling token of kindness, a magnificent gift, drawn from a severe and cold heart, is like golden fetters, which weigh upon the mind not the less heavily for being made of costly materials. Thus the assistance which the affluence of Lady Clairville might have afforded them, was not coveted; although the sum squandered on one of the evening assemblies at Clairville House would have rendered unnecessary the perfect change in their situation, and for months have supported them in comfort and respectability, still they murmured not, feeling they could better bear the privation than the reproaches and taunts which doubtless would have accompanied any pecuniary aid. Besides this, they had deeper sorrows to occupy their hearts than the mere absence of the elegancies and comforts to which they had been accustomed. There was the separation from a husband and father tenderly beloved—there was the suffering and sorrow of a mother who claimed all their best care and affection—and lastly, there was the poor little Rose, who had been so long ailing, and who now grew gradually worse. She was a lovely fair infant, of a delicate and fragile appearance; and from her beauty and weakness, was an object of the tenderest interest to the whole family. As for Evelyn, she doted on the poor baby with all the fervor of her enthusiastic nature; and whilst the nurse was often obliged to relinquish her charge, in order to bestow her attentions upon the sick mother, Evelyn most readily took her place; and so tender was her care, that the poor little sufferer would never willingly leave her arms. To add to all the afflictions which thus crowded round them, their medical attendant, who had ever been the comfort of the family, was at this moment out of England. The sickness of an only child had obliged him to relinquish every other engagement, and go with her in search of that health which even his great skill was unable to command.

"Oh, if our dear doctor were here, he would save this darling child!" exclaimed Evelyn one morning, when tortured with grief she looked upon the dying baby who lay upon her knees, and witnessed its sufferings and exhaustion. "He knows all our constitutions so well, I have often heard mamma say that he saved me once from the very hand of death. But O, dear Herbert!" she continued, while the tears rose to her eyes, "can I, ought I to be thankful? Would it not have been happier for me to have died when I was as this dear angel, than to have lived to witness all this wretchedness?"

"Evelyn, my dearest Evelyn," Herbert replied quickly and reproachfully, "your grief has weak-

ened your spirits, or you would not speak, thus; you could not thus murmur at the will of God, or doubt the wisdom of His decrees. It was His mighty hand which rescued you from death, by a chosen instrument; and are you so changed, my sweet sister, as to think you were preserved merely for your own happiness? Think of your present situation. Young as you are, you are already actively engaged in the duties of life. Are you not performing the office of a mother to those who are deprived of a mother's care? If you had died young, what would have become of us, darling Evelyn?—you who are our comfort, our everything?"

Evelyn felt the tender reproach as it was meant, and leaning forward to the arms extended to embrace her, shed tears of love, of sorrow, and of re-awakened piety on her brother's bosom. Her heart was too full to allow her to speak; but her virtuous resolves were all strengthened, and meekly and piously did she pursue her labor of love, agonizing as it was to her feeling heart.

What are the sorrows of the prosperous in comparison to those of the needy? They have all earthly resources within their reach; and when sickness comes near the dwellings of the rich, how much is there to alleviate the visitation! The best medical advice, every luxury to nourish the drooping frame, commodious apartments, careful attendance, and all those comforts we so fervently covet for the sick. The needy have none of these outward alleviations to soothe them; and when poor Herbert and Evelyn thought of former luxuries and indulgences, in the small attic to which the little girl had been removed on her becoming much worse, that her moans should not reach the ear of the suffering mother, it is only natural that they should for the moment have supposed that, had it been the will of God to have continued the prosperity they once enjoyed, the darling Rose might have been spared them.

Mrs. Cecil was so very ill, and the time of her confinement was drawing so near, that their great anxiety was to keep the increased sickness of the poor baby entirely from her knowledge. Indeed she was so weak, and in such a state of nervous irritability, that she was not allowed to see her younger children; therefore it was not difficult to keep her in ignorance of this fresh sorrow; and little did the poor mother imagine how soon the pure spirit of one of her babes would wing its flight to heaven.

It was a stormy dark night, the rain and wind beat heavily against the unshuttered windows of the dismal apartment in which Evelyn sat, as usual, with the child upon her lap. The day had been intensely hot; but Evelyn, though nearly worn out with fatigue and sorrow, would not relinquish her charge to the woman who had been engaged to assist in its attendance. Herbert was tenderly sharing in the afflicting task. The woman, who was herself a mother, and a kind and well-meaning person, saw that the babe was dying, and earnestly entreated to be allowed to take it from Evelyn, anxious to spare her the misery of witnessing its last struggles. But Evelyn still pressed the poor baby to her aching heart; its infant gaze was fixed upon the countenance which had so constantly beamed tenderness and love towards the helpless sufferer, and a sweet though faint smile was on its pallid lips. Presently it closed its eyes as if to sleep; but almost instantly a convulsion seized its frame, and in another moment all was over.

Herbert burst into tears, but the source of Evelyn's grief was closed. She kissed the dear babe, and allowed the woman to take it from her. Her brother sought to lead her from the room, but she resisted his wishes, begging that he would leave them; and not until all the last sad duties were performed, did she think of quitting the object of her cares and sorrows; then kneeling by its side, she thought of her parent who was in exile, and the remembrance of his tender love towards the child, flashed upon her mind, and she exclaimed in a voice nearly distracted, "Father, I have done my duty by your darling babe;" and nature being thoroughly exhausted, she sunk into a long and fearful fainting-fit.

CHAPTER X.

"And he went forth, alone! not one of all
The many whom he loved, nor she whose name
Was woven in the fibres of the heart
Breaking within him now, to come and speak
Comfort unto him. Yea, he went his way,
Sick, and heart-broken, and alone!"

It was not alone on the desolate family in Kensington, that sorrows and misfortunes rested; the unhappy Captain Cecil also drank deeply of the bitter cup of affliction, without one palliating circumstance; and with the overwhelming reflection that it was his madness, his criminal disregard of the dictates of common sense, that had called down all this misery upon himself and upon those dearer to him than self.

On first leaving his mansion in the Regent's Park, Captain Cecil lingered for a short time in the suburbs of London, in order to gain time to make some necessary arrangements for the little comfort that could be secured for his family; and also to take strict precautions in his intended flight to the Continent, having heard that means were in preparation for his arrest, at more of the seaports than one. His embarkation, however, was at length safely effected at Southampton; and on landing in France, he took up his abode in the little town of Honfleur, immediately on the coast. It is scarcely possible to imagine greater wretchedness than now assailed him. The occupation of business connected with his affairs, and the excitement attending his escape had now ceased; and he was alone in his misery, with no one near to whom he could turn for some word of comfort,—no friendly being who might beguile some of the long and dreary hours which crept so slowly and sorrowfully away. Possessing the most affectionate and tender of hearts, which was wholly devoted to the wife and children from whom he had been severed in so cruel a manner, it is not to be wondered that such excess of grief crushed to the utmost his spirit, and for some time he gave himself wholly up to despair.

Living in the meanest lodging; denying himself nearly the very necessities of life, that the little which remained to him of former prosperity might be husbanded for the service of his family; thinking by day and by night of the wife of his bosom, alone, sinking and suffering, at a moment when his utmost care and tenderness were most to be desired for her—his every thought was distracting—his every feeling tinctured with woe, unutterable; and death, scarcely now to be dreaded, seemed really hovering near the broken-hearted man.

In the apartments immediately below the room

occupied by Captain Cecil, there was lodging a Catholic priest. Le P^re Liot was a man of education, and of an enlightened mind; he had travelled much, had mixed freely with his fellow-creatures; and although devoted to his own form of religion, from a conscientious belief of its being the only true one, still he worshipped in the religion of his fathers without bigotry or narrow-mindedness, and could look on those without the pale of the Roman Catholic Church, with benevolence and the purest Christian charity.

The attention of this excellent man was first attracted to the circumstance of the apartment above him becoming occupied by the sound of footsteps, which appeared eternally to pace up and down—without cessation or change; even during the silent hours of night he sometimes heard him. The good man, at length, was about to complain of this wearisome interruption, as a nuisance not to be endured; but on mentioning it to a man who was in the habit of waiting upon all those who lodged in the house, he gave him such a description of the unfortunate occupant of the room above, that the tender compassion, as well as the curiosity of the kind old man was excited. On hearing that he constantly wept over a picture,—that he scarcely took adequate nourishment for his support,—that he appeared ill and suffering, and completely absorbed in grief, he longed to be of some use to the unhappy stranger, and sought with impatience for an opportunity by which he might introduce himself. For many days he watched in vain to obtain an interview with his unfortunate fellow-lodger; Captain Cecil did not leave his apartment, nor indeed were his agitated steps heard any longer pacing the chamber. The impatience of Monsieur Liot could scarcely stand this trial; and the fear of intruding alone prevented his seeking him. At length, however, he was told, that the poor Englishman was dangerously ill. His ceremonious scruples then instantly vanished; and truly like the good Samaritan did he hasten to alleviate the sufferings of his fellow-creature, unheeding the difference of country and religion.

He entered the mean and scantily furnished apartment; and there, stretched upon the bed, was the form of this once happy and prosperous man. His mind quite distracted by the effects of a brain fever, he lay calling in the most pathetic manner upon his wife and children; at one moment addressing them with the fondest expressions, and then again, deprecating their reproaches, by imploring them to pardon him. A paroxysm of actual frenzy succeeded this fearful mental excitement, which nearly baffled the united strength of Monsieur Liot and the attendant, in their efforts to prevent his committing some fatal act of insanity.

Most providentially an English family, who were proceeding to Italy, had been detained some time at Hyvre, by the illness of one of the party. In his visits to that town, which was merely separated from Monsieur by the Seine, Monsieur Liot had met, at a reading-room, the English physician who accompanied Lord B——'s family; and recollecting the circumstance, he lost no time in sending a messenger to solicit the doctor's attendance on his suffering countryman. The request was immediately and cheerfully complied with; and although it required the utmost skill and discipline to subdue this fearful attack, Monsieur Liot had the satisfaction of seeing the strength of the disease weakened by the course

pursued. By slow degrees Captain Cecil was restored to consciousness; and the first object he beheld, on again opening his eyes unobscured by the vapors of delirium, was the venerable form of his unknown benefactor seated by his bedside, and a clean-looking old woman, who appeared quite established there, sitting near the fire quietly knitting. There was a degree of comfort surrounding him which was most soothing to his feelings; and he again closed his eyes, almost fearing the sense of calm and repose which had stolen over him, was but one of the delusions of his fevered brain. He then felt his temples bathed with eau de Cologne, and again the same hand fanned his burning brow,—a hand so gentle, that he could almost fancy himself under the tender care of the dear ones whom he had lost. However, this blissful uncertainty was soon destroyed; and again looking around him, he fixed his surprised gaze upon the mild countenance of the old man, who, to re-assure him, said in a gentle tone, "*Ne vous inquiétez pas, mon cher ami, tout ira bien maintenant.*" The foreign language at once recalled to the remembrance of Captain Cecil his exile from his country—all the dreadful train of incidents accompanying it rushed upon his mind; and the wretched man, bursting into tears, hid his face in the bed-clothes.

From this hour, however, Captain Cecil became gradually convalescent; and he rose from his bed of sickness, an altered, and a better man. Although in his most prosperous days he had ever had a sense of religion, yet it had not been his support in affliction. The excitement of his mind had been such that he could not pray—deep despair had closed every avenue to his heart; but he was now softened and completely subdued. There is something in sickness which breaks down the pride of manhood, and brings it to the feelings of infancy. Thus it was with Captain Cecil. He was like a child in the hands of his new friend, to whom he poured forth every secret of his soul, and received comfort from his heartfelt sympathy; while he was edified and made better by his true and unostentatious piety. He prayed with him, and his prayers were such as would have satisfied the most rigid Protestant, although they did flow from the lips of a Roman Catholic; while, with tact and excellent judgment, he avoided, in his religious conversations with the unhappy Englishman, all those controversial points or allusions which might offend the ear or heart of his auditor. His simple aim was to give comfort consonant with Christian principles; and it was balm to his kind heart to witness daily the effect of his goodness upon the noble being to whom he had been drawn by his warm and compassionate feelings. His kindness was as persevering as it was active; and he continued to watch over his charge with anxious tenderness, anticipating his wants, and providing for them.

Captain Cecil was no longer the despairing being he had been some time before; though dejected, he was resigned. "Gold is tried in the fire, an acceptable man in the furnace of adversity." Indeed, if we could bring our minds into a state of acquiescence under affliction, we should be happy; not only in spite of our worldly sorrows, but through them. The very idea that our trials are sent from above, and that we are under the immediate eye of God, would be deep and unfailing comfort under every tribulation. It is this conviction which would

support us through all our sorrows, and throw even a heavenly radiance over "the dark valley of the shadow of death."

At this time Captain Cecil received a letter from England, which contributed to cheer him. His dear and excellent children made the best of every thing, in order that their father's mind should be as little harassed as possible; and Herbert's letter was couched in the following most guarded terms:—

"We are very uneasy at your silence, dearest father. Many sleepless nights it has caused me; and at some moments I have scarcely been able to restrain my impatience sufficiently to prevent my leaving all the precious objects you have committed to my charge, and setting sail for Havre, to ascertain at once how you are. Every day more convinces me of the good judgment which induced you to make our darling mother promise not to read, or allow us to read to her, our letters to you, and your answers. Your tender expressions would be too much for her, and she is kindly anxious for our sakes, to keep herself as tranquil as possible. We now tell her that you are well; although, whilst doing so, our hearts throb, and our tongues falter with the dread that our deception may be visited upon us by hearing that you are ill. Write, dearest father, constantly; for our comfort depends entirely upon the sight of your dear and valued letters. I saw Mr. Disney yesterday, and I am happy to tell you that every thing is going on favorably with regard to our affairs; therefore, dear father, keep your mind as tranquil as you possibly can. Mr. Disney intends writing in a few days, and you will find from him, that time will do much in lessening your present difficulties. We cannot expect to see our beloved mother better until after her confinement, but then we trust firmly in God's providence that she will recover. I never leave her, and am, I can assure you, almost as good a nurse as yourself; at least, I endeavor to walk in your steps. You may depend on our dear mother not wanting any comfort. The children are all well, with the exception of poor little Rose, whose great delicacy appears rather to increase than diminish. Sweet Evelyn continues our comfort and our stay; you could scarcely believe were I to tell you all that she does for us. She is thoughtful and *prevoyante* in the extreme; and yet you will be glad to hear that she can still indulge in those merry laughs which never failed to make you smile. Edwin is a dear good little fellow, and is getting on famously with his Latin."

Such was the tenor of the letters Captain Cecil received. His good children studied every word before they committed it to paper, fearful that they might say too little or too much. In this manner they endeavored, and with success, to keep his mind in a degree at ease, and little did he imagine what these young creatures really had to encounter: for although Herbert's account was so far true, that Evelyn's gaiety of heart, which was so inherent to her disposition, did at times enable her to laugh; oftener, much oftener, did she weep; and her last trial, which took place, of course, after Herbert's last letter was despatched, left her for a long time in a state of suffering and dejection.

Captain Cecil's great comfort now consisted in being able to talk for hours to Monsieur Liot about his wife and children. He showed him their pictures, and those beautiful representatives of this

lovely family could not fail to touch the heart of the kind old man. They made him feel, almost with a pang, how great must be the power of parental joy, which could thus lighten the most gloomy of woes; and he could almost have envied his friend the possession of such children. He read their letters, and admired the noble style of their writing, while every day he became more and more absorbed in interest and sympathy for every member of the Cecil family.

Now that Captain Cecil was restored to the former energy of his character, he did not sit down in idleness to contemplate his grief. He anxiously turned his thoughts to the best manner in which he could make himself most useful to his family; now that the dread of a disgraceful arrest kept him from their presence, he wrote in a more business-like manner to his solicitor, giving him many useful hints as to the arrangement of his affairs, where before was all chaos and confusion. He was a man of talent and of education; and having often thought of writing a work of professional reference much required in the Navy, he now seriously commenced its composition, sending to England for those books necessary for the undertaking. He also made arrangements with a London publisher with whom he was well acquainted, who engaged to take of him lighter articles for magazines, and of which the small profits, in the humble manner in which he now existed, served almost to maintain him. These really useful and profitable labors occupied his mind, and kept thought from pressing too heavily upon him; and although his grief sat most sadly at his heart, with manly and dignified resignation he endured it.

CHAPTER XI.

"——" 'Tis hard to give thee up,
With death so like a gentle slumber on thee.

He covered up his face, and bowed himself
A moment on the child; then giving her
A look of melting tenderness, he clasp'd
His hands convulsively, as if in prayer;
And, as a strength were given him of God,
He rose up calmly."

SORROW was still busy with the Cecil family, and we again turn to the chamber of death, where we left the poor fainting Evelyn. With the assistance of the hired nurse, Herbert carried his afflicted sister to a bed in a small closet in which he usually slept, and endeavored to restore her to consciousness; but this they found no easy task; her naturally strong feelings had been so painfully excited, added to which constant watching, and the little time she gave herself to swallow nourishment, had entirely exhausted all the powers of her frame. Long and fearful was the period that she remained insensible; and when she at length opened her eyes, she was so languid and weak, that when morning dawned upon this miserable party, Herbert sent for the apothecary, who administered a composing draft, by the means of which, in a short time, they had the comfort of seeing her sink into a profound sleep.

Most painful and difficult was the task which poor Herbert had to encounter when he was obliged to appear before his mother. She happened to be rather better than usual, and a shade more cheerful.

When he came to her bedside, she said, "Dear Herbert, you are late in coming to me this morning. I longed to tell you that I slept better last night than I have done for some weeks, and I feel so refreshed."

that I am sure I can bear to see my darling little ones. It is now ten days since my eyes have had the joy of beholding them; and that poor little Rose, I have been dreaming of her all night. I fancied her, as I often do, a little angel; I saw her fluttering around me with light wings; and when I put out my arms to clasp her, she smiled, pointed with her little finger to heaven, and flew away. She appeared so ethereal, that I long to see her in her own dear bodily form, and press a warm kiss upon her sweet soft cheek."

Herbert shuddered, and it was fortunate that the darkness of the room prevented his mother from seeing his disturbed countenance, as the question presented itself to his mind. "Was it possible that the spirit of the child had really hovered round the mother, before it forever winged its flight to God? Did the Almighty thus allow the parent to receive the last look of her babe?" It was a dark and mysterious point, and Herbert felt that the ways of Providence were inscrutable and "past finding out."

He left the room rather suddenly, saying something about the child being asleep. His feelings nearly overpowered him. He sought Rachael, whose counsel he wished to obtain under the present emergency.

He found her seated by the inanimate form of her loved nursling, immersed in grief. She had only learned the sad news on quitting her mistress's room; for as the poor sufferer had slept, for a wonder, the whole night, she dared not move for fear of disturbing her.

Poor Herbert would fain have cast himself upon her faithful bosom, as he so often had done in childhood, and mingled his bitter tears with hers, so completely was his spirit at that moment crushed. The affectionate woman saw his anguish; and taking his hand which she pressed to her lips, endeavored to soothe him by saying—

"Our tears, my dear child, are very selfish. We ought to rejoice for this sweet babe, for see how happy she is. Look at her—does not her little tranquil face tell us not to grieve for her?"

And indeed when Herbert looked at his infant sister, the angelic expression of her countenance was truly that of a blessed spirit; "Sweet silken primrose, fading timelessly."

But then the distressed Herbert thought of his mother. It was her child, and who but a mother knows what it is to lose one? No matter what its age or qualities, the same cord binds it to the heart; and when it is severed, the agony is equally sharp. Circumstances may cause the wound to heal in some cases sooner than in others, but who can fathom the tender sorrow of a mother at the first infliction?

Herbert now felt for the first time that his strength was failing him; he had not the power to act or think in this difficulty. Most opportunely, Mr. Wilson the apothecary at this moment was announced, who had returned to inquire after Evelyn. He could not fail to be much interested in this family, and most kind was he in his attentions towards them, while his admiration was greatly excited by the beautiful affection which they evinced towards each other. Herbert communicated to him his present anxiety, and Mr. Wilson confirmed their opinion that every precaution must be taken to prevent Mrs. Cecil from hearing of the poor baby's death. Her state was such that any fresh agitation would produce symptoms which had already threat-

ened her life. He took upon himself to dissuade her from the fatigue of seeing her little ones. He succeeded in his undertaking; and after listening patiently to his reasons for wishing her to remain in a perfect state of tranquillity, both of mind and body; and indeed feeling too forcibly her complete prostration of strength, she gave up the point, and Herbert was, comparatively speaking, at ease.

Poor little Edwin, during these sad scenes, had advanced beyond his years in intelligence and usefulness; and instead of being a charge to those older than himself, had been of material assistance in taking care of his little sisters during many a tiresome promenade in front of the house, and in frequently executing even distant commissions for the family. Nothing cultivates the powers of children and brings them so forward as necessity, which is the mother of many things besides invention; and it is doubtless for this reason that we generally see children in large families so soon equal to assist themselves, while the indulged only child, with all its wishes anticipated, remains helpless.

Edwin was returning home very weary after a rather harassing expedition for a child of his age, when, near Kensington gardens, he suddenly encountered the strange gentleman whom he had not seen for some time. His unknown friend immediately addressed him, exclaiming, "Well, my dear little fellow, I have not seen you for ages. How are you? and how is your sweet sister?"

"Evelyn is not well," said Edwin gravely, his eyes filling with tears; for he was a child of great feeling, and deeply did he grieve for the death of his little sister, and for all the sorrow he witnessed around him.

"But what is the matter with her?" said the gentleman, kindly taking his hand.

"Oh! sir, my little sister died the day before yesterday,—sweet darling Rose! Poor Evelyn used to love her, and nurse her so much, and so did we all, but Evelyn scarcely ever had her out of her arms, and now that she is dead," and here the poor little fellow wept bitterly, "Evelyn is ill too. We dare not tell mamma, who has never left her room since papa went away, and we are all so unhappy."

"But tell me, my dear boy," said the stranger, sympathizing most truly in the poor child's sorrow, "is there anything that I can do for you? Who is your father? what is your station in life?"

These words seemed to recall Edwin to himself. He hastily wiped his eyes, and with an air which almost partook of dignity, he said, "Oh! sir, you know that I must not tell you; so good-bye! I must make haste home, or they will be uneasy at my long stay."

"Stay one moment," said the stranger, who was becoming still more interested in the charming boy.

"I am not going to ask you any more questions, therefore you need not be afraid—but, my dear child, take this to your sister, and tell her that it comes from one who is most desirous of being of use to her, and to her family,"—at the same moment, he put a bank-note into Edwin's hand.

Edwin's eyes sparkled with joy. He had seen how much money was wanted, and he thought this would indeed be a valuable acquisition.

"Oh! thank you, dear good sir; I am sure she will be so glad. Now she will be able to get many things she wants so much for mamma; and I heard Herbert and nurse last night calculating the expense

it will be to bury poor darling Rose," and here his tears again began to flow. "This money will indeed be a comfort!"

The gentleman, with a tear glistening in his own eyes, that were not wont to weep, pressed the boy to his heart, and longed to take him and to be a father to him.

He continued to gaze after him for some time, and saw him, notwithstanding his former weariness, run full speed towards Kensington, eager to place his treasure in the hands of his sister, and thus to gladden the hearts of all at home. The stranger returned to his splendid mansion with that feeling of satisfaction at his heart, which he never derived from his communication with the world, flattering and obsequious as it ever was to him.

Edwin stopped not until he reached the door of the humble dwelling now his only home. It was opened to him by Herbert, who was watching anxiously for the return of his dear little brother. He was panting and out of breath, but he looked bright and happy; while, with an air of exultation, he put a note of fifty pounds into his hands. "See, dear Herbert," said he, as soon as he could speak, "see what I have got for Evelyn!"

Herbert looked at the note with unfeigned astonishment; pleasure at the same time animating the melancholy expression of his countenance.

"Where did this come from?" he asked impatiently.

"Our kind gentleman gave it to me, and said it was particularly for Evelyn," Edwin replied, and then repeated all that had passed between them.

Herbert became thoughtful and grave, and seemed lost in reflection. "Edwin," he at length said, "I must consult with Evelyn. I am not certain whether we ought to take this money."

They went to Evelyn. She was seated, looking so very pale and dejected, that it was scarcely possible to recognize in her the sprightly blooming Evelyn of former days. She was not, however, giving way to listless sorrow; she had been ill, but was still at the post of duty. At her knee stood her little sister Lucy, who was now the youngest of the family, and Evelyn was giving her the first instructions in reading, whilst Laura was at her side, conning most assiduously a French verb. A large basketful of work on the table before her, showed plainly that Evelyn had no time to be idle.

"See, Evelyn," said Edwin, pointing to the bank note in Herbert's hand; "see what our kind friend, the gentleman, has sent you."

"Oh! how kind—how good!" exclaimed Evelyn, starting up from her chair. "This is a friend indeed, sent by God to assist us. Herbert, is not this cheering, just at the moment when we are so much in want of money?"

As Evelyn spoke, some of her former vivacity sparkled in her countenance; but when her eyes met Herbert's, she saw that he did not participate in her satisfaction.—"What is the matter, Herbert?" she said quickly, "You do not seem rejoiced at this timely aid."

"My dear sister," Herbert said, sorrowfully "but firmly, "we must not accept it. We must ever act as if our father was before us; and with his fastidious ideas, do you think he would like us to accept this bounty—or lay ourselves under so deep an obligation to a complete stranger, of whose name even we are ignorant, and whose acquaintance with your com-

menced in an unusual manner? No, there is something in accepting this charity," and Herbert's lip curled almost disdainfully as he spoke, "which grates harshly and painfully upon my feelings. We know not what may be the character of this man. No Evelyn, it cannot be. Edwin must return it. Much as we are in need of money, I cannot let you take it."

Herbert turned away, and left the apartment with a feeling at his heart which was bitterness itself. He was fully aware of his sister's extreme loveliness; a thought crossed his mind which caused his whole frame to tremble with emotion, and his eyes to flash with fire. He felt impatient to rid the house of the money; and returning rapidly into the room, he said with a degree of irritability very unusual with him, "Edwin, I shall not have a moment's peace until you return that money."

Evelyn and Edwin could not enter into Herbert's excited feelings. With the innocence of their pure hearts they could not imagine why they should hesitate to accept relief from so kind and generous a person.

But such was the habitual respect which they entertained for the opinions of their elder brother, that his most slightly-expressed will was their law; they therefore at once submitted to his present earnestness, though with deep regret.

The next day Edwin was sent forth to meet the stranger, and fortunately almost immediately encountered him, as he was taking his usual walk in the Park.

Edwin appeared before him with downcast looks and faltering steps, for he did not like the office which was imposed upon him. "The dear kind gentleman," he thought, "will consider it so ungrateful in us to refuse what he offered so kindly—so generously! And Evelyn thinks so too, but Herbert must be right."

"Sir," he said, at once beginning the subject of his errand, "Evelyn is very much obliged to you, but here is your money. You must take it back if you please. Herbert does not approve of it's being accepted, but we are very, very grateful notwithstanding." Here the little fellow stopped in his speech, which had been studied on his way, and looked up for the first time into the stranger's face. Seeing that it expressed mortification, he threw his arms round him and wept bitterly, saying, "Don't be angry, dear sir—pray don't be angry."

"I am not angry, my dear boy," the stranger replied, returning his caresses: "I am only very sorry. I went home yesterday hoping that I had contributed to your comfort; and at this moment, heaven knows, I would give a great deal to be of use to you and your family. In the world in which I live, I seldom meet with those whose conduct excites in me the feeling which you have called forth."

The stranger mused pensively for a minute or two, and during that short period, a grave smile, and a faint color passed over his usually pale countenance. He then added, "Tell Herbert, as you call him, that I can fathom his motives, and therefore I honor him for what he has done. I wish I knew him, and then I think I could convince him, that my sympathy for his family is purely disinterested; and that I am still most truly desirous of being of service to you all."

"Oh! thank you for speaking so kindly, dear

“sir,” Edwin replied, reassured by the stranger’s words. “I am already so very unhappy, that I could not bear to lose your kindness also. How often I wish I was older, that I too might be of some use to them; but I am such a little boy that I am now only an additional trouble.”

“Would you like to go to school?” inquired his friend anxiously.

“Certainly, but that is out of the question now; indeed, perhaps I might be unhappy to leave them all now they are all so wretched; but it would be a good thing if there was one less at home to trouble them. Even now that we have lost that sweet darling Rose, Rachael says that it is better for her; and oh! sir, though poor Rachael cries while she says so, she tells us we must feel that it is better for others.”

Such was the nursery philosophy that the poor child had gathered in affliction, which may be truly said to purify and enlighten every age and every station. Even in this young boy, its sanctifying and patience-teaching influence was plainly visible.

The gentleman was much affected by these evidences of affection and resignation.

“Edwin,” he said, “I have it in my power to send you to an excellent school, where you would be educated free of every expense to any one; but I must know your name. It is far from my intention to wring your secret from you merely for the sake of indulging an idle curiosity, but my wish is to serve you effectually.”

“I am sure,” said Edwin with boyish openness, “if it only depended upon me, I would tell you this instant. I do not know why they wish it concealed, particularly when I have often heard my father say he loved his name and every thing connected with it. But I will ask Herbert, and tell him what you have said.”

“Well, my boy, ask him; and let me hear to-morrow,” said the stranger, kindly patting the soft rosy cheek, which even sorrow had not robbed of its bright coloring. “Not to-morrow,” said Edwin, shaking his head mournfully. “To-morrow, at one o’clock, poor Rose is to be buried.”

They then parted. Edwin had not an opportunity of speaking to Herbert upon the subject of the foregoing conversation that day; for he was almost in constant attendance on his mother, who was suffering more than usually from languor and extreme depression of spirits; and when he felt able to leave her under the charge of Evelyn or the anxious Rachael, his attention was employed upon business of a harassing and absorbing nature.

CHAPTER XII.

“A boy! yet in his eye you trace
The watchfulness of ripper years,
And tales are in that serious face
Of feelings early steep’d in tears.”

“And now the grave for its cold breast hath won thee!”

THE next morning a deepened gloom seemed to prevail throughout the lowly dwelling-place of the Cecils; it was the day appointed for the funeral of the little girl. What was to be done with Evelyn, whose sorrow this day burst forth with fresh violence? As long as the little coffin still remained, and she could gaze on the sweet placid form which it contained, Evelyn felt that something still remained to her of her dearly loved nursing; but when she was led from the room, in order that the undertaker might perform his office of closing for ever from her sight

the precious remains, she felt as if until then the babe had scarcely died. Herbert was aware that his only expedient was to take her into her mother’s room. There he knew she must control her feelings.

His suffering parent was particularly feeble that day, from having passed a wretched night. Herbert said to her, “Dear mother, it is very unfortunate that both Rachael and I are obliged to go out upon business, for Evelyn has a dreadful headache; but she can lie quietly upon the sofa at the foot of your bed, and as you appear inclined to sleep, she can watch silently by you; we shall not be away long.”

Herbert’s excellent judgment in this case strongly evinced itself; for, once near her mother, Evelyn felt that her sorrow was selfish, was wicked, when compared to that endured so patiently by her suffering and beloved parent.

Mrs. Cecil in the tenderest manner expressed her regret at her indisposition.

“Kiss me, dearest,” she said; “I fear you exert yourself too much for my sake. You have certainly not been well lately, your hands and lips are burning. Repose yourself, my darling; and let us both endeavor to sleep; do not think of me, for I will call you if I wish for anything.”

The room was darkened, therefore the sad appearance of poor Evelyn was not perceptible to her mother, and she did not trust her voice to speak. Herbert placed her upon the sofa, after having made her swallow a composing draught, and there she lay with her head buried in the cushions struggling with her feelings. At length soothed by the opiate which had been administered, she fell into a deep and refreshing sleep, whilst the sick mother in her turn, watched with anxiety over her slumbers.

Herbert in the mean time, accompanied by Rachael and Edwin, proceeded with a sorrowful and an aching heart, on the sad duty he had to perform. When in the churchyard, where the earthly remains of the poor baby were to be deposited, he and his companions were too deeply absorbed in the melancholy ceremony in which they were engaged, to be aware of the presence of more than the few children who generally loiter to witness a funeral; and as they stood over the little grave which the sexton was rapidly closing over the unostentatious coffin, they little imagined of what deep interest and scrutiny they were the objects.

A spectator was there, who with anxious attention examined the countenance of Herbert.

The stranger, who had been deeply moved by his last conversation with Edwin, could not divest himself of the earnest desire to learn something of the history of the family, about which there was evident mystery and secrecy. Having heard from his little friend the hour at which the funeral was to take place, he determined to go to the churchyard, and with his own eyes behold the Herbert of whom he had heard so much, and of whom he had formed as it were intuitively, or by the force of his imagination, a high and admiring opinion.

Herbert stood with his fine head uncovered. His countenance, though pale as marble with emotion, expressed a manly firmness, in which were mingled the tenderest feelings. His form was tall and commanding, though bending in reverential prayer as the service proceeded, and his dark eyes were dimmed with tears. He held by his hand little Edwin, whose light waving locks and fair complexion, flushed with a bright color from weeping, formed a strong

contrast to the pale face and ebon curls of his brother. He was leaning his head against the arm of his poor nurse Rachael, who was indeed at that moment the very personification of care and sorrow;—sorrow for the babe who had been torn from her, care for the beloved objects still left to fill her heart with anxious tenderness. She was truly “Rachael weeping for her children, and would not be comforted.” It was altogether an affecting scene, and perhaps never in the course of a long life had the stranger’s feelings of sympathy been so powerfully and tenderly excited.

When all was over, he saw the clergyman advance towards Herbert, most kindly shake him by the hand, and say a few words which were evidently those of benevolent condolence. His friendly expressions seemed listened to by the young man, with a grateful courtesy, though apparently he was too much agitated to speak; and he soon turned to depart, still leading by the hand the poor little heart-broken Edwin, whose sobs were audible even as they quitted the churchyard.

The stranger, who till then had stood by a projecting part of the church, which had partially concealed him, now came forward; and politely accosting the clergyman, immediately entered into conversation respecting the melancholy little party who had just quitted their presence.

He drew from him only that, until that day, he had always known the young man and his sister by the name of Norton; but that, on the occasion of the funeral, he had confided to him their real name, requesting that the one disclosed to him might not transpire. “Therefore,” added the good-hearted old man, “you will excuse me, sir, from betraying the confidence of that very charming youth. I am by no means surprised that he should have attracted your interest and attention,—indeed, I never saw such a family. There is a lovely girl, apparently about seventeen, who regularly attends my church, with a little brother or sister on each side of her; and while her feminine and graceful exterior attracts much observation, I can perceive she is so absorbed by piety and devotion, that she is unconscious of any notice. Though so young, however, I fear she has already drunk deeply of the bitter cup of affliction. She prays fervently, but it is often with tears coursing each other down her youthful cheeks. God grant that such innocence and heart-felt prayers, may be heard by His unfailing mercy; and that sooner or later comfort may overtake them!”

“It shall—it shall—my good sir,” exclaimed the stranger, much moved by the words of the old clergyman, and kindly pressing his hand. “But tell me more about them, or my best wishes to serve them may be futile.”

“I know very little, sir,” the clergyman replied, eyeing the stranger with some curiosity, in which, however, no unworthy suspicion was blended; “I know very little; for they live most strictly private, and have declined, though gratefully, those attentions which I have offered, considering them as part of my parochial duties. I have heard of them chiefly from Mr. Wilson the apothecary, who is a kind-hearted man, and who has actually shed tears when he has related to me the magnanimous conduct of those young people.”

The stranger paused for a few moments, and appeared lost in thought; he then anxiously requested that he might accompany the good man to his house,

in order that he might have some further conversation with him.

It is not necessary to relate all that transpired during this *tele-a-tele*, as the results will appear as we proceed in our story; however, it was observed that the clergyman conducted his visitor to the door, on his departure, with great ceremony and profounder bows than he usually manifested; and that he returned to his study with a flushed though pensive countenance, remaining particularly thoughtful during the rest of the day.

CHAPTER XIII.

“If thine open hand hath relieved distress—
If thy pity hath sprung to wretchedness—
It will bring relief to thine aching brow,
And with joy and peace thou wilt sink to rest.”

ON Herbert’s return home, he found Evelyn still in a deep sweet sleep; and his mother, with some of her former solicitude, listening to her soft breathing. Her slumber still continued, and when she at last awoke, she was not only considerably refreshed, but had gained strength of mind and composure.

The next day dawned more brightly upon the distressed family. A letter arrived from France which they had dreaded to receive; but their father, in answer to the one which had announced the death of the little girl, had so controlled his pen, that he spoke of the event with a degree of calmness and resignation which had greatly comforted them.

He thanked his fondly loved children in the warmest terms, for their devoted kindness to his babe, and for all their unremitting attention to their mother. He spoke soothingly of himself, telling them of his improved health, and the solace he had experienced in the society of the excellent Monsieur Liot; and concluded by saying, that he was becoming quite rich by the profitable labors of his pen. In short the letter was a balm to their wounded feelings.

Whilst they were still musing over these satisfactory communications, another letter was delivered to them. It was in an unknown hand, and addressed to Herbert by the name, which, in compliance with his father’s wishes, he had adopted. He opened it hastily, with curiosity, and read as follows:—

“ALTHOUGH my proffered services have been once refused, I am not to be repulsed. I feel too deep and heartfelt an interest in the welfare of your family to allow you to reject the assistance of a friend, who is so willing and able to serve you. I have discovered your true name; and you may be assured, with that knowledge it is far from my intention to offer any insult to the children of Captain Cecil. In early life, he once received from me the greatest of benefits. This is not mentioned as a vain boast; but to engage that confidence of his family, without which my best wishes must prove nugatory; and I now offer that protection and support which I feel certain, if he be indeed the Herbert Cecil, the friend of my early youth, he would accept with pleasure. I have procured the promise of a nomination to the Charterhouse School. It is my most ardent wish that Edwin should benefit by it. I love the boy, and am anxious that the good and honorable feelings which are united in him should find a favorable sphere for their development. I inclose a hundred pounds for the expenses of the necessary preparations for his removal. I leave town to-morrow; but in a fortnight or three weeks,

I trust to be able to present Captain Cecil's permission for the steps I have taken; and the assurance that I may consider henceforth the fine little fellow as the child of my adoption. For the present I sign no name. I have also my reasons for wishing to remain incognito."

Amazement and joy were visible upon the countenance of Herbert when he placed the letter in the hands of Evelyn, who, with much anxiety, had been watching his countenance whilst he perused it.

"Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning;" and this was joy assuredly, to find in the depths of sorrow, that still the hand and eye of kindness were watching over them, and that they did not stand alone and uncared for in the world.

There was a blunt friendliness in the letter that seemed to bespeak the writer as sincere and honorable; and Evelyn's raptures and rejoicings seemed at once to recall her from the deep sorrow which had lately taken possession of every thought and feeling. She had always felt a peculiar sensation of trust and confidence in the stranger; though Herbert had censured so strongly the acquaintance, that she had determined henceforth to alter her conduct towards him, and henceforth avoid, as far as lay in her power, every opportunity of future intercourse with him. But now to be able once more to believe that he, who in spite of herself had won so completely her consideration and respect, was indeed their friend, and that he had been misjudged by the too fastidious Herbert, was in itself happiness to one whose loving heart, in charity with all mankind, suffered pain at being taught to doubt the probity of any one.

Again, if she rightly understood the sense implied by some expressions in his letter, they were there instructed to consider this stranger—this chance acquaintance, as the friend—nay, more than friend—in some way the benefactor of their father. There seemed in this such a romantic combination of delight to the ardent spirit of Evelyn, that it brought smiles of joy once more to her radiant eyes and rosy lips. Again she perused the letter; and at every sentence her gratitude burst forth in expressions at once evincing all the fervor of her kind and feeling heart. At length a shade of sorrow passed over her expressive countenance, as, turning to her brother, she said, "O Herbert! how wrongly you have judged this generous being! How ungracious—nay, how ungrateful must our rejection of his former munificence have appeared! Oh! let us hasten and endeavor to find him, that we may repair our faults and show that we can be grateful."

"Softly, my sweet Evelyn," Herbert replied, almost amused by his sister's enthusiasm. "You forget that our unknown friend tells us he is to leave town to-day, for his letter is dated last night; and moreover, I can scarcely yet give credence, to such uncalled for and gratuitous benevolence. It almost appears to me that, by some strange chance—for instance, through this mysterious benefactor,—our kind cousins have discovered our distresses, and that he is rather the instrument of their benevolence, than its author. Both Julian and Blanche guess well if they suppose, that charity from the merest stranger would be scarcely so wounding to our feelings, as relief from the hands or purse of a Clairville—from a sister who refused, so insultingly to assist a brother! It is a hard case at any rate," Herbert

continued, sighing. "But I will go, and consult Mr. Disney. We can also write to our father, and receive his answer before the expiration of the fortnight which is to solve this mystery. By that time, however, Edwin ought to be in perfect readiness, so that, if we are indeed allowed to accept this advantageous offer for the dear little fellow, the stranger may not consider us backward in availing ourselves of his friendly services."

Evelyn still thought Herbert cold-hearted in his hesitation and doubts, and even felt as if it were an injustice to the exquisite kindness of the stranger, thus to attribute to others what she felt by an innate persuasion was the result of his own pure and disinterested benevolence. She longed to take a pen, and pour forth, in the most enthusiastic terms, all she felt upon the subject to the kind friend who had come forward like a ministering angel, in their hour of distress. She wished to call him by every name which her warm gratitude could suggest. But Herbert checked her with his grave smile, saying, "This must not be, dear Evelyn. You are too much the creature of impulse; and although I may love you the more for this excitable, though pure and confiding nature, still it is my duty to repress it. You may think me cold and ungrateful; but believe me that it is a painful effort to me thus to doubt—thus to weigh the propriety of accepting relief, which at this moment is so needful—so well timed. Yes, dear Evelyn, you may look incredulous; but be assured I feel equally inclined with yourself to seek this generous man and to tell him all the gratitude I feel,—all the happiness his benevolence offers to us, and to our poor, little, neglected Edwin. But in the responsible situation in which my father's misfortunes have placed me, I dare not act without advice; therefore I will at once proceed to Berner's Street. Mr. Disney, as a man of the world, is well calculated to counsel me on this subject; besides, from the length of time he has known my father, he may be able to guess who this incognito friend actually is; particularly as it appears to me that some benefit has already been bestowed. I will also mention to him my half formed suspicions, that after all it is to our cousins we are indebted for this mysterious donation. Evelyn, do you not think," and the color mounted to the pale cheeks of Herbert as he spoke; "do you not think it likely that the delicate feelings of Blanche have prompted her thus to wrap in mystery the simple truth of her compassionate generosity?"

Evelyn did not think so. There had been a consistent kindness and sympathy in the manners of the stranger, from the first moment of his presenting to her her lost watch; she had also heard from Edwin all the particulars of his many interviews with him; and she had made him repeat most minutely all that had been said when his first benevolent offering was returned. To her, then, there was nothing extraordinary in this second act of munificence, when it appeared that their distresses were known to him, and that he had the power, as well as the will to relieve them. As far as regarded the nomination to the Charterhouse, loving the attractive little Edwin as she did, the kindness to him seemed the most natural thing in the world. With feeling, though hurried eloquence, she imparted all these reasons to her brother, who seemed relieved by her conclusions that it was to the stranger alone they owed the generous gift which came so opportunely to their

assistance; and kissing her cheek affectionately, he begged her to compose herself, and to go and watch by their poor unconscious mother, who still must be kept in ignorance of all that was passing.

Herbert, the patiently-enduring, the noble, suffering Herbert, that day went forth happy, and more light of heart than he had been for months. A gleam of hope crossed his mind which seemed to tell him the clouds of adversity were dispersing; and he breathed an inward prayer that so it might be, and that at least the bright prospect opening for his loved and cherished Edwin might be realized. This sunshine—this happiness—sprung from a single act of benevolence from one who, hazarding it as a commencement of the services he wished to render this distressed family, scarcely dreamt of the cheering effect it would produce.

There is ever this blessed result from the pure and spontaneous actions of benevolence. The clouds of distress fly from before them; the storms of misery and affliction are made to abate; and spreading blessings around, every thing seems to partake of the brightness benignly extended to the sufferer. It is truly the glorious attribute of God, ever to have mercy and unfeigned kindness: but man may here imitate without presumption; and as the mandate has gone forth, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," why is it that men will rather hoard for their sins, than dispense the good a bounteous Providence has laid at their disposal?

"Twill be the comfort of your latter day,
In sickness and in sorrow it will cheer you,
To think that you have protected the unhappy."

These are not vain words; their truth has oftentimes been proved; and will again. There are others of a higher and holier authority. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." The duty is enjoined, the reward is promised; we read it—we hear it—and alas! some vain pursuit, some frivolous gratification, will bid us forget it all, and treat with neglect and coldness the mourner we might have soothed.

Could the stranger have witnessed the glow which hope and satisfaction caused to mantle on the pale cheek of poor Evelyn, he must have rejoiced that, unchecked by the fastidious delicacy which had first repulsed his wish to serve them, he had persevered in his good intentions. But although anxious that his proffered assistance should be well received, he was not in the least aware of the excess of difficulty and embarrassment which rendered what he considered a sum barely sufficient for the expenses attendant on the fitting out a gentleman's son for a public school, a means of increasing the comforts of a sufferer who, but for his aid, must have still endured great privation.

He had merely heard from the good old clergyman, who appeared to be so warmly interested in the piety and gentle bearing of Evelyn, that her brother the morning of the funeral had imparted to him, that they were the children of Captain Cecil of the navy, though, for private reasons, at present passing by the name of Norton. The stranger, on questioning further, could learn nothing more than that they were evidently in very straitened circumstances, and that their father had never been seen with them, though Mr. Wilson, the apothecary, described the mother as being in a very precarious state. From his own conversations with Edwin, the

stranger however had gleaned, that the plans for his public education had been set aside by the embarrassed circumstances of his father; and though scarcely believing that thus left in sorrow and seclusion, they could indeed be the children of the Captain Cecil, of whose connection with the Clairville family he was well aware, he gave way to the impulse of befriending, to the utmost of his power, the noble and attractive boy in whose favor he was so deeply interested.

Intending, during a visit he was about to make at Oakwood to gain all the information he could, previous to the expiration of the time which must elapse before Edwin should be conveyed to the Charterhouse, his plan was, if his inquiries proved that the interesting beings with whom he had so accidentally become acquainted, were the family of the Captain Cecil whose distresses had been so publicly discussed, he would at once make himself known to them. He was well aware that his name and station in society would give them that confidence in him, which it was apparent that they now withheld. The reserve and delicacy of feeling which he had perceived in their characters, met with too kindred a spirit in his own bosom to be lightly dealt with; and to his ardent desire of serving them was added the wish of doing so in the most effective, as well as in the least displeasing manner possible.

Herbert returned home from his consultation with Mr. Disney, with his spirits still raised, and with hopes at least sanguine for his little brother, though his own fortunes were as dark and unpromising as ever.

Mr. Disney, on reading the stranger's letter, had immediately advised the unhesitating acceptance of an offer so replete with importance to Edwin, and recommended a letter being immediately written to Captain Cecil for his sanction, urging the strong motives for his forwarding it to them. A letter was therefore instantly despatched to France.

The answer arrived without delay, and was just what Herbert wished, and Evelyn had prayed it might be.

Captain Cecil was overwhelmed with surprise and gratitude. The pride which had once pervaded every feeling in his bosom, and might have prompted the rejection of a stranger's services, was now laid low. By the holiness inculcated and set forth by the example of the good priest, his heart had been brought to religion and a more intimate knowledge of God; he could now think of his reverses with a feeling which made them an hourly and salutary lesson. What had brought him to his present lowly condition, but proud, inordinate, extravagant desires? Pride, that evil principle on which the Scriptures pronounce a curse, had been the incentive to all his efforts. No matter whether it was for riches, for rank, for influence, or for the minor advantages of refinement and respectability that his wishes had been directed, pride had been at the bottom of all. To be distinguished; to be foremost, to be more than his fathers had been, and still to push his children above himself, had been the one predominating motive of all his actions. And God—was it in displeasure?—had gratified the proud desires of his heart. But the reproof of Heaven had now gone forth, and he prayed that it might be in mercy.

It is true he had not coveted riches to hoard, but did profusion make covetousness less a crime? It is true that with intention he had defrauded no man.

but could he be certain that the murmurs of some unpaid creditor had not reached the ears of the Almighty? Was his blind excess an excuse for injustice? Although his days had been one scene of festive pleasure, no immorality, no profaneness had marked their course; but was man born to immortality in another world, to exercise no other vocation in this than that of the Sybarite or the Epicurean of the heathens? He felt *not*. He felt that his whole life had been one chaos of mistaken aims and ends, and his soul sickened at the review of his mis-spent years.

This was the tenor of the letter which affected the sensitive Evelyn to tears, neither did it leave the eyes of Herbert undimmed; but they were not drops of sorrow, but tender rejoicings at the excellence of a father. Captain Cecil offered no surmises as to the identity of the stranger. He said that it must indeed be the hand of a friend, that could bestow, at such a time, so great a benefit upon his poor destitute boy, and he prayed that he might prove himself worthy of such consideration. With regard to the mention made of some benefit conferred upon himself, he said that in a profession so fraught with danger, as the one into which he had so early entered, he had been in situations where the greatest services had been rendered him; too many indeed for him to hazard any conjecture on the subject. If, indeed, it were some early comrade who was now befriending his helpless children, the discovery would add much to the happiness he had already bestowed, and he supposed a short time would solve all that there was of mystery in the affair.

Nothing now remained for Herbert and Evelyn but to prepare for the departure of Edwin to the Charterhouse. The liberality of the stranger had afforded ample means for them to procure everything that was necessary to send him from home, as the son of a gentleman; and by the industry of Evelyn, every essential preparation was soon completed. Though rejoicing in his good fortune, she could not help feeling very sad when she thought how short a time he had now to remain with them; and her warm and tender nature shrank from the idea of parting with a being she so fondly loved.

Edwin, although at first enraptured at the change which awaited him, and anticipating with childish joy the gambols with boys of his own age, so different from the stillness of the dark narrow street where he now passed so much of his time; still, as the separation drew near, he felt his spirits sink. He had once or twice seen Evelyn's tears drop on the work she was completing for him; he sought to console her by telling her how hard he would study, that he might become a great and a clever man, and be of use to them hereafter. Evelyn would dry her eyes, and for his sake endeavor to be cheerful; but as he sat in silence by her side, apparently watching the preparations she was making, if he detected an expression of sadness on her countenance, he would glide from the room, and more than once he was discovered in some solitary corner weeping bitterly.

However, all this was soon to come to an end. Ten days had elapsed of the fortnight, at the end of which they had every reason to expect some further communication from the stranger; and already every letter presented to them, every approach to their humble dwelling, caused an agitation as well to the usually imperturbable Herbert, as to the more easily excited Evelyn.

It was an interesting epoch in their lives. They trusted the hour was about to arrive when they should know the name of the person who had so benevolently sought to serve them; and at the time they felt the happy assurance that they were about to become acquainted with one who might prove their friend and protector, amid the clouds which had risen to darken their young hopes, and to overshadow the bright expectations in which former prosperity had taught them to indulge.

CHAPTER XIV.

"Her brow
Lofty like this, her lips thus delicate,
Her neck thus queenly, and the sweeping curve
Thus matchless, from the small and pearl-round ear,
To the o'er polished shoulder."

"I FEEL so glad that you begin to understand me a little better, Mr. Sinclair," said Lady Florence, as leaning upon the arm of Julian, they sauntered through a sequestered and beautiful part of the Park. "It really grieved me when I first came to Oakwood, to see that you regarded me almost with an evil eye."

"Nay, Lady Florence," Julian replied in that light tone of gallantry which means nothing, and of all others was the most displeasing to his fair auditor, who felt that hesitation and anxious denial of her charge would better evince the interest which it was now the sole aim of all her actions to create in his bosom. "Nay, Lady Florence, you must better know your own manifold perfections than to indulge in such a supposition. Could an eye look evil on such bright curls as these?" and with the easy familiarity which, scarcely known to himself, her caressing manners encouraged in him, he touched the beautiful ringlets which a favorable zephyr had drawn from the protection of her morning *capote*.

"Well then, if it was not an evil eye, it was an apathetic one," Lady Florence said almost panting; and with the prettiest aggrieved air possible, added, "do you know, Mr. Sinclair, I have been all my life such a spoilt child,—so cherished, so petted, that indifference now seems to me almost aversion, and that is not the most agreeable sentiment for one to inspire who has thoughts of kindness for all the world."

"Dear, dear Lady Florence," Julian anxiously interrupted, "you do me much wrong if you think I ever harbored one unkind feeling towards you. When you first arrived at Oakwood, my mind was painfully engrossed, my every feeling so jarred and out of tune, that until you deigned so sweetly to interest yourself in my ungracious misanthropy, I could scarcely think of intruding *mes ennuis* in the gay crowd which usually surrounded you."

There was much of dissimulation in this assertion, and the wily Florence detected it as soon as uttered, but she dreamed not of resenting, or even of remarking it. She felt that the deception arose from the desire of ingratiating himself, or at least from the wish of glossing over to her his former neglect, and this was something gained from the late impracticable Julian.

She was for some moments silent; at length turning her lovely countenance full upon her companion, she said archly, yet tenderly,

"I should have thought, Mr. Sinclair, those sunny eyes of yours might have seen more clearly, and have shown you that *ore* sigh of your *ennui*, as you

term your most Werter-like melancholy, would have been more pleasing to these poor ears, than all the nonsense to which they are usually condemned to listen. Mr. Sinclair," she continued more seriously and with a pathos in her voice that vibrated sweetly on the heart of Julian, "you rather mistake me; and mistaking, do me injustice. I know that appearances are against me. I know that I am considered thoughtless and vain, but my heart is not so devoted to folly as you may believe. It is true there is a void in it, an aching, craving void, which I have been vain to fill up with vanity and dissipation; but, alas! it could not be so satisfied. It would have been happier for me, perhaps, had it really been as you suppose, and that this poor, poor heart had not discovered there were feelings and affections never before dreamed of in its philosophy. But it is now all too late; these feelings, these affections must be crushed, must be utterly destroyed."

She turned away her face as she ceased speaking, but not before Julian had met a glance of such passionate tenderness from her deep blue eyes, in which large tear-drops were standing, that a tremor passed over his whole frame, while his heart beat with a violence that for a few moments impeded his powers of utterance. At length, pressing with much fervor the trembling hand which still rested upon his arm, he said in low tones, but with an expression of greater feeling than he had yet evinced towards her.

"Your sympathy, dearest Lady Florence, has soothed a spirit which was consuming me; your gentle pity has proved a solace to annoyed feelings which I scarcely believed they were capable of receiving. In gratitude for the consolation the contemplation of your loveliness offers me, in gratitude for all your exquisite kindness and indulgence, you must in your turn suffer me to be the consoler, the patient and sympathizing listener to all your griefs. Is it possible, Lady Florence, that with the idolatry of a world at your disposal, you have one wish, one hope unanswered?"

A sigh and a mournful shake of the head were the only reply; and leaving them, we will revert to the incidents which had thus brought matters to what Lady Florence in her own mind would have termed so charming a consistency.

The true state of the case was this. Lady Florence having once excited the interest of Julian by her adroit mention of the Cecil family, was determined to leave no means untried to increase this interest, and gain his confidence. With her bewitching graces of manner, and a power of amusing, given her by most consummate tact, as well as a quick insight into character, can we wonder that she soon gained her point? Her motive was of a mixed nature. Some real feeling mixed up with a great deal that was as light as the gossamer floating in her path. A desire of showing superiority over the Lady de Cressy, was decidedly the first incentive to her actions, vanity and the love of admiration had their full share in encouraging them; but now there was a guilty spirit of love and passion at her heart, that forbade the discontinuance of her plans of subjugation.

Lady Florence was young, and her appearance was even peculiarly youthful. Dressed always from the caprice of the moment, and looking equally lovely in any style of attire, she had worn during the first days of her *sejour* at Oakwood, her beau-

tiful hair braided upon her fair forehead, while, as if to indemnify her beauty for this simplicity, the most splendid jewels sparkled on her brow, and glittered in her massy costly ear-rings. The richest satins and velvets added fulness to her youthful and nymph-like figure, and their bright glowing tints lent additional delicacy to the beauties of the exposed bust, and to her soft symmetrically rounded arms.

The day after the conversation recorded in a former chapter, Julian almost started with surprise when he beheld Lady Florence glide into the room before dinner, attired simply in a dress of white muslin. Her thick and luxuriant hair was merely twisted in a Grecian knot at the back of her head, whilst long glossy ringlets shaded her lovely face. No ornament was there, excepting one, exquisitely beautiful flower, that must have tortured the head gardener's very soul to have seen borne from the hothouse by the privileged and spoliating beauty.

Julian's eyes were riveted upon the fair vision which floated before his view. His heart beat high, and his eyes almost filled with tears. In the twilight of the room a resemblance struck him, which filled his bosom with a melancholy rapture, and as he gazed on the surpassingly lovely figure, before him, as she sat listlessly turning the leaves of an illuminated album, even his vision might have been deceived, and he could have fancied he was looking upon the dearly beloved Evelyn. The shape of the face, the hair and complexion, were all similar; and the shade of the evening mellowed those tints, which though in Evelyn less dazzling, were more spotlessly fair.

Julian could not withdraw his eyes from the bright illusion, but remained a little withdrawn from the rest of the party, with his arms folded, mute as a statue, and with his whole being, as it were, wrapped in contemplation. Dinner at length was announced, which aroused him from his trance, and obliged him to give his arm to a Dowager Duchess, to lead her into the *salle à manger*. His eye, however, wandered very much to the other end of the table, where the beautiful Florence was seated, and his attention was certainly not very much devoted to the aristocratic antiquity by his side; for to her question whether he preferred *Perdrix en compote*, or *au chou*, he replied that he thought Melnotte an abominable shoemaker, and not to be compared to Negri. This vague answer made the haughty duchess turn sulkily, and he had then no further obstacle to his admiring observation of the metamorphosed Florence. Her quick perception soon discovered that the *ruse* had been successful, and that she had gained an influence in one moment over Julian's feelings, which only required tact and opportunity to strengthen.

When the gentlemen adjourned to the drawing-rooms, Julian was immediately at her side; and that evening, which was mild and beautiful as the last, she was induced to take his unoccupied arm and join Lady de Cressy and himself in their moonlit walk upon the terrace.

From this time, all reserve and coldness had vanished from Julian's manner towards the exquisite enchantress. Once having possessed himself with the idea that she resembled Evelyn, the fancy grew upon his imagination, and appeared to sanction and encourage his attentions to her—at least, it was thus he accounted for them to himself. Nor was anything wanting on the part of Lady Florence to

strengthen the delusion; while she most sedulously guarded against all appearance of appropriating his strict attendance on herself, by avoiding to withdraw with him from the usual circle which surrounded her; guessing with much discernment, that nothing was so likely to hurt the exalted idea he probably entertained of his own constancy: but her manner to him was softness and sympathy itself. She led him by degrees to talk of Evelyn, and ended by gaining his entire confidence.

How soothing—how delightful it was to his previously perturbed feelings to be able to speak of her he loved to one who appeared so fully to appreciate her merits and perfections, and who entered so warmly into all his sorrows! while it was an exquisite balm to his wounded spirit to hear the “one loved name” pronounced with praise and sympathy, by a voice whose silvery sweetness lent even a further charm to the theme.

Julian walked with her, rode with her, took long drives with her through the picturesque scenery which surrounded Oakwood, and soon—too soon, the society of Lady Florence became most necessary to him. Their conversation at first was certainly all of Evelyn; but still, whilst repeating her name, were not his eyes fixed upon a countenance of most transcendent beauty? did he not wait an answer from lips, whose rosy smiles, whose every movement was eloquence? There was danger to the most devoted—the most constant.

His proud mother looked on in silence, and smiled triumphantly. “The silly boy is at length disenchanting,” she would say, “and Evelyn Cecil’s reign is over. That clever charming Lady Florence has done the work for me most dexterously—most beautifully. Once disentangled from that first ridiculous love, he will soon find himself obliged to get rid of the second; and then think himself but too happy in securing for a wife the amiable and richly endowed girl he now scorns.”

This last reflection brought ever with it a glow of satisfaction, and it mattered not to her by what means the end was to be accomplished. The marriage of Julian with her ward was the one consuming hope of the ambitious heart of Lady Clairville. It filled her every thought, and was the inciting cause of all her actions. For this, she bartered the eternal peace of her son, and exposed him to the seductions of one, beautiful as a Hourii, and exacting as a Cleopatra; for whom admiration was danger, and love a crime.

CHAPTER XV.

“In the darkest night, and the bright daylight,
In earth, and air, and sky,
In every home of human thought,
Will love be lurking nigh.”

THERE was one who now looked on at passing events with a dissatisfied eye. Blanche de Cressy was hurt and mortified; not, however, as her self-constituted rival believed, and gloried while believing; for though loving Julian, it was but with the affection of a tender sister she regarded him; still it grieved her to see how completely another was usurping her place, and that she, whose bosom had hitherto been the repository of all his hopes and fears—whose ear had ever been open to all his murmurings, was now comparatively neglected.

The young Baroness had conceived no very favorable opinion of Lady Florence. Though younger

than Julian, she had lived much more in the world; and with that quick perception of character which usually comes sooner to maturity in women than in men, she saw at once all the faultiness of the nature of Lady Florence, with the errors fostered by the mode of life pursued by her. Having already “been out,” as the affair is termed, a season in London, Blanche had gained much insight into her conduct, from the circumstance of her visiting list being nearly that of Lady Clairville’s; and though scandal had as yet attached no glaring criminality to her name, the Baroness knew that the serious part of the community thought her *success* too eagerly sought, and her conquests too ostentatiously exhibited.

Julian’s life had hitherto been passed either at college, or in travelling on the Continent. His vacations had all been spent in the country; and, until he met Lady Florence at Oakwood, he had been scarcely aware that such a person was in existence. In the crowded assemblies he had occasionally entered during the last season, his mind had been too much occupied with the difficulties his attachment to Evelyn Cecil seemed likely to encounter, to allow him to distinguish one among the many lovely women his eyes might rest upon. Lady Clairville had encouraged this indifference as being favorable to her views; but she had now changed her plans; and, as if borrowing from the system of homœopathy, it appeared she was of opinion that to bring him into what she considered a healthy frame of mind, he must exchange one disease for another before the real cure could be effected, and he be disposed to enter into her wishes.

Blanche beheld with dread the influence that was daily gaining more power over the feelings of her cousin. She thought of sweet Evelyn, and felt indignant for her. She was angry with every one—with Julian, Lady Florence, and with her aunt, who she plainly saw encouraged, by every art in her power, the growing intimacy of her son and her lovely guest. Still, dissatisfied as she was with the least show of injustice or forgetfulness to one of the beloved Cecil family, she felt herself powerless in the present circumstances, and every day less able to counteract the magic of the enchantress.

Our young Baroness was an enthusiastic being, though a reserved and impenetrable manner scarcely gave evidence of her warmth of heart, or of the fervor which characterized her every feeling. Her affections and dislikes all partook of the ardor of her nature, but happily there was a deep well-spring of tenderness in her bosom which made the former the predominating spirit. Although only nineteen, for more than two years she had been devotedly though secretly attached to Herbert Cecil. In his most prosperous days she well knew he must be poor, but she also knew the extent of her own possessions. From her earliest childhood she had heard these riches form the theme of many a conversation. It was told in an audible whisper when she paid her visit to the drawing-room; and in the nursery, the words—“such a rich young lady as your ladyship,” were everlastingly sounding in her ears. In the school-room, too, her wealth was brought before her in a variety of methods, but never in so disagreeable a manner, as when, puzzled with the arithmetic she hated, her good governess would say, “For you, Lady de Cressy, a clear knowledge of arithmetic is of the utmost importance, if you intend, as I fervently trust you do, to attend in some degree, to your own

affairs, and not to suffer the responsibility attached to your immense possessions to be vested in the person of some paid agent. Reflect, how much more you will have in your power to do, if you rightly understand what you have to expend, and how it is appropriated."

To this excellent governess Blanche owed much.

Sensibly and religiously brought up from perfect infancy, the idea was ever forcibly impressed upon her heart, how fearful a trust is the possession of riches; and how much is required from those upon whom much is bestowed. She was taught, also, that, if wealth administers only to indulgence and luxury, if the claims of humanity are forgotten, and riches serve only to give facility and splendor to vice, the retribution will be certain as it will be fearful. Earnestly did this good woman inculcate the most inestimable precepts, feeling conscientiously anxious that her much loved pupil should hereafter apply the rich gifts which had been bestowed upon her to their legitimate purpose—the glory of God, and the welfare of mankind.

Thus, in the midst of pride, and folly, and worldly-minded principles, Lady de Cressy was trained up in innocence and piety. Mrs. Stewart, her governess, had the tact and good sense never to express opinions which opposed or interfered with the whims of Lady Clairville. She felt such deep interest in her pupil, that for her sake she wished to complete the good work she had begun. So inoffensive had she been, that, although without in any way compromising her integrity or independence, even this wayward woman of fashion had become in a measure attached to her, and allowed her to keep her place in the school-room, although its avocations were now at an end. Partly from inclination, but more in consequence of Blanche's earnest prayer, she consented to retain her office, though its duties had expired. Still presiding in the deserted school-room, she remained in voluntary seclusion; a seclusion, however, which was cheered by the frequent presence of Blanche, whose tender manner towards her was like that of a daughter; and every moment was spent with her that the youthful Baroness could steal from the claims of society.

Mrs. Stewart well knew the feelings which existed in the heart of her pupil for Herbert Cecil, and though she discouraged them, she had not the resolution to endeavor harshly to check sentiments so natural, and so ingenuously confided to herself.

The noble and cultivated mind of Herbert, with his manly and peculiar beauty, pleaded also strongly for him; and perhaps a little womanly romance mingling with her admiration for his excellence, made her in a slight degree countenance the pure and disinterested attachment which flowed from the generous heart of the youthful peeress. At times, however, she would dwell on the great disparity of their fortunes, and the wishes of Lady Clairville; but her pupil would tell her that was just the reason why a union with Herbert was desirable. "I am so rich," she would say, "that I ought not to desire more. All that is requisite in any marriage is a sufficiency, surely; and if there should be money on one side, how can it signify on which it lies? and how delightful for any woman to be able to show the disinterestedness of her affection, by bestowing all freely upon Herbert—by giving wealth to one so good and noble, I should gain his assistance to enable me to pass safely through this world, which

offers so many fatal temptations to the possessors of wealth. My heart, if unaided by the support of one to whom I can look up with respect as well as love, may be alienated from those duties which you seek to inculcate upon my mind. When I look around me, and observe the conduct of those who move in the circles in which I live, how often I shrink with fear to think that such might be my lot! Married merely in consonance with the wishes of their friends, without preference, or even a day's consideration, it is improbable as it is unfrequent, that anything like domestic happiness should be found."

Such artless expressions of her sentiments as these were ever most pleasing to Mrs. Stewart, who hailed in them the symptoms of that trust and ingenuous affection she had been ever anxious to inspire. Still, though loving the Baroness for the child-like simplicity which led her thus to speak her every thought, she felt it incumbent at the moment to remind her, that the choice which had been made for her, was of one in whom virtue as well as talent and attractions were united; at the same time that his fortune and station in life were nearly equal to her own. Lady de Cressy looked hurt, as she said reproachfully, "My dear friend, how can you urge me upon that subject—you, who know so well how we are all situated! Have I not always regarded Julian in the light of a brother? Even if our hearts were free, I could never consider him in any other relation. But you know so well his deep and fervent love for Evelyn, that you can only speak thus as a matter of form; thinking that as *Madame l'Institutrice*, you ought so to advise me. I am certain my dear Mrs. Stewart loves both Julian and myself too well to recommend seriously a union between two individuals so averse to such a measure."

Could Mrs. Stewart argue further against her dear pupil's anxious reasoning? She knew how completely she despised the pomp of wealth, and how little she valued the pleasures it commanded; pleasures, which she saw only tended to enervate and pervert the mind. Indeed it was almost her daily observation, that wealth, rank, and splendor, have no certain connection with felicity;—that there are disappointments over which they have no power, and troubles which they cannot exclude;—that they can neither mitigate bodily anguish, nor shield the heart from woe.

Mrs. Stewart still felt, however, in a difficult position, thus listening to opinions so inimical to the views of Lady Clairville; and she was also troubled when she reflected that the Baroness was still in perfect ignorance of what Herbert's feelings were as relating to herself. Was he aware how fortune seemed resolved to smile upon him, in the form of this charming girl? She could not offer a surmise on the subject, so thoroughly unconscious did he appear of the deep impression he had made upon her heart.

The truth was this: admiring Blanche, with all the fervor of his young and ardent nature, Herbert felt that the knowledge of her immense wealth and exalted rank had placed an insurmountable barrier between them which his pride could never surmount. Still, as he looked upon her expressive countenance, witnessed her goodness, and saw with delight her unfeigned humility of mind, in the midst of so much adulation—such unmixed prosperity,—his heart swelled within him with a bitter regret, that so fair,

so excellent a being could never be his. He would have died rather than have expressed this sorrow, feeling that her destiny was in a higher sphere; and though he might look up and admire, it would be an infringement on honor to attempt to win her. Still, he had rejoiced in the evidences of her kindness, and had felt justified in showing her the tender and unreserved affection of a cousin; and even while repeating those lines of the poor Helena,

"It were all one,
That I should love a bright, particular star,
And think to wed it."

He would continue the quotation with a mournful satisfaction,

"In her bright radiance and collateral light
Must I be comforted, not in her sphere."

He was indeed comforted by the intimacy their consanguinity permitted; but still no unguarded word or look ever betrayed the deep and passionate feelings of his heart.

No wonder, then, that Mrs. Stewart had experienced anxiety respecting the tenderness of Blanche for her cousin. At one time, thinking she ought to use all her power to discourage and repel it; and then again, feeling that the whole being of her enthusiastic pupil was too much wrapped up in this spontaneous affection, for her to hazard wresting from her this, her greatest happiness, either present or prospective.

CHAPTER XVI.

"Tis difficult to see another,
A passing stranger of a day,
Fluck with a look thine heart away."

WITH feelings such as have been described in the foregoing chapter, we cannot wonder at the sorrow which Blanche experienced in daily witnessing Julian's apostasy from the friend of her bosom, the sister of him whose interests were dearer to her than her own.

Her mind filled with sorrowful reflections upon this very subject, she was walking one morning in the Park, listlessly and alone, when, on turning suddenly into a shady walk, she discovered the two objects of her thoughts. She was too near them to retreat without speaking, which was her first impulse; but Lady Florence was seated on a rustic bench not ten yards distance; and Julian, who was reclining on the grass near her, saw his cousin the instant she entered the shrubbery. Provoked at coming in such close contact with those whom she would have wished earnestly at that moment to avoid, the color rose to her cheeks, and she looked displeased and embarrassed. But the expression of her countenance assumed a severer character, when she perceived the mixture of feelings betrayed by that of Julian. He too looked provoked; but still confusion and agitation were the most conspicuous symptoms of his inward perturbation.

Julian, who had risen on Blanche's appearance, remained standing, but without speaking or even raising his eyes to the countenance of his cousin.

Lady Florence was the first to break the awkward silence, and said, with the greatest composure, though a malicious smile trembled in the corners of her lovely mouth—"Sit down, dear Lady de Cressy, and admire with us this splendid view so judiciously let in by this opening in the wood; for though, doubt-

less you have often contemplated it, it is a scene which must be ever-varying—ever new and beautiful."

Blanche made no reply; but apparently without observing her constrained manner, Lady Florence continued,—"The lights, and shadows falling on that picturesque hill, are for ever placing objects under a new aspect. I could, gaze for hours had I not a more interesting occupation. You can now assist me, Lady de Cressy. Do sit down and second my efforts to raise the spirits of your melancholy cousin."

"If Julian is in low spirits, it must be perfectly without reference to anything upon which I can give him consolation," Blanche replied, giving way to an impulse of anger which was in general foreign to her nature. "I am going home;—pray do not let me disturb you," she added haughtily, yet with tears in her eyes that seemed to contradict the sternness of her manners, and which she vainly endeavored to conceal. She then walked rapidly on, and never stopped until she found herself within the sanctuary of her own *boudoir*. There, throwing herself into a large arm chair, she gave full vent to her feelings.

She was mortified and grieved, and could Lady Florence have beheld the evidences of her grief, she might well have mistaken its source, as she had done the nature of her feelings, towards Julian. But it was the jealousy of a doting sister which Blanche experienced, and much of disappointment and regret mingled with her feelings. The Julian whom she had imagined almost perfect, to be thus changed! No longer tender towards herself, or true to the love he had so long professed; but devoted to the society of—giving his whole thoughts and attentions to, one his better nature ought to condemn; and oh! how unlike the angelic Evelyn!

Blanche wept bitterly, and her tears seemed to be increased by the variety of sources from which they flowed. She was soon joined by Mrs. Stewart, and to her she poured forth all her griefs.

"But this is not all," she added, after a pause which was broken by her sobs, "this is not all that I have to tell you, my dearest friend, upon this painful subject. I am fearful that I must also incur your blame, and that I have given way to an impulse of anger in a manner which was scarcely lady-like, and which must have displeased Julian: but you cannot imagine what I felt—what I have felt for days. My pent-up feelings could no longer be repressed. I, who have been ever since I can remember, the chosen sister of Julian—from whom he never kept a thought, and who seemed necessary to his every happiness and delight,—to find, that since the arrival of Lady Florence, our intimacy by degrees has almost ceased—nay that I am even avoided by him—oh! this is too cruel. And then, when I think of poor Evelyn, and what I have so long hoped to see realized, it almost breaks my heart to see him hourly becoming more and more entangled in the snares which that vain, worldly-minded woman throws around him."

Mrs. Stewart was grieved and shocked by what she heard, and for the sorrow it occasioned her beloved pupil. She felt for Julian almost as much affection and interest as she experienced for the Lady de Cressy, and her kind-voice was rising in his defence, when a quick tap at the door made them both start, as it was a sound well known to their ears.

"What shall I do!" exclaimed Blanche, hastily

wiping her eyes; but she had no time to regain her lost composure, for Mrs. Stewart's immediate answer of "come in," brought Julian instantly before her.

He had entered with a flushed and almost angry air; but as soon as he beheld Blanche in tears, he was in a moment at her feet, and seating himself on a footstool, he took her hand, while affectionately kissing it, he said, "My own darling sister, what is the matter?" Blanche could make no reply; her tears flowing faster than ever: but they now came from feelings soothed and softened. Julian again before her, seated in his old place at her feet, with his own kind expression of countenance, anxiously endeavoring to read her feelings, and looking at her with affection and apprehension, bade all her doubts and fears almost immediately vanish. After a moment or two, which she found necessary to gain some steadiness of voice, she placed both her hands within his, saying kindly, though a little reproachfully, "Julian, you have made me very unhappy, more so than I can describe; and I should be wanting in sincerity, and in the confidence you have a right to claim from me, did I not at once confide in you the occasion of my grief."

Blanche then entered into the subject by explaining to him the state of her feelings for the last fortnight. She told him how jealous she felt for Evelyn, and for herself; how it had grieved her to see him pass every moment with a woman of light and artificial character, and whose own conduct proved her designing in the extreme. Blanche was too severe in her strictures on Lady Florence, and it was injudicious in her thus to force them on Julian's attention, who, it was evident, judged of her far more favorably. He felt that she showed too much severity, but there was a consciousness of error in himself, and an anxiety to be restored to the tender approval of Blanche, which prevented him remonstrating, or saying aught in defence of Lady Florence. However, the enthusiastic Baroness proceeded so rapidly in her discourse that he could scarcely find a pause wherein he could make any remark. She next spoke of Evelyn, so different in her sweet and angelic purity—her childlike innocence—to the artificial and exacting coquette, who now occupied his time and thoughts; who teaching him to find happiness in her smiles and attentions, had caused him apparently to forget her, who might at that very moment be dragging on a miserable existence, cheered by no one thought, save that of his tender affection and remembrance. Long did Blanche speak, becoming every moment more earnest and eloquent on the subject of her words, as she perceived they affected her auditor. She proceeded uninterrupted by Julian, who sat with his countenance shaded by his hands; and even when she had ceased speaking he still remained silent. A long and painful pause ensued, which was at length broken by Julian, who, rising with a pale and agitated countenance, said in a low mournful voice, "Blanche—my dearest Blanche—every word that you have uttered has sunk deep into my soul; and as far as regards myself, I feel the justness as well as the severity of all you have said. I have indeed sinned against the affection I profess for poor Evelyn; even by suffering it to appear that I have allowed a moment's forgetfulness to remove her from my thoughts. But my fault shall be expiated," he continued, after heaving a deep sigh; "I must leave this place—leave all the follies I have been guilty

of. I will commence again a diligent search for the retreat chosen by my uncle for his family. Mr. Disney may now, perhaps, be induced to confide it to me. So rest in peace, dear Blanche—once discovered, my Evelyn shall have protection—my arm shall be her support; and, together, surely your efforts and mine, however insufficient, may at least do something towards ameliorating the sufferings of my poor aunt and her children."

"My own dear Julian, this is like yourself," exclaimed the delighted Blanche. "Once discover these dear cousins," she added, "and we may be all happy." A rosy blush and a smile of joy which illumined her speaking countenance betrayed how far the hopes and expectations of the sanguine girl had reached.

When the party assembled before dinner, the aspect of affairs had considerably changed. Julian was pale, his manners cold, and reserved, as on the day Lady Florence first beheld him, though there was a degree of constraint and embarrassment in his bearing now, which had not then been visible.

Lady de Cressy was all smiles and happiness, although a flushed countenance and agitated tone of voice might have evinced even to a careless observer, that something had occurred to excite her feelings in a most lively manner.

Lady Florence looked into the countenances of both, and beheld in an instant very strong symptoms of rebellion to her dominion, if not evident signs which threatened the termination of her reign. Still she was not discouraged. Julian had betrayed to her that he had feelings and affections of which she in some measure held the command; and guarding most carefully against exhibiting any marks of disquiet or anxiety, she contented herself with calm, awaiting the moment of renewing her empire over one, whose temporary dereliction had showed her of what value he was to her heart.

When Blanche had left them in the wood that morning, Lady Florence had perceived that Julian was violently moved by his cousin's agitated manner, though he had sedulously endeavored to conceal it. But notwithstanding his best efforts, he had been silent and abstracted during their walk to the house. On entering it she had said to him,

"I think, Mr. Sinclair, in consideration of all the pomp and ceremony with which the arrival of this favored magnate of Lady Clairville's is to afflict us, you ought really to drive me in your phaeton to that lovely wilderness we saw yesterday; that at least some show of nature may prepare us for the display of odious art, that doubtless this banquet, which is to welcome the Duke of Strathhaven, will exhibit to us. How I hate stars!" she added, laughingly; "and what is more, how I hate stargazers!" Lady Clairville told me this morning that she expected at least twenty of those inanimate specimens of the creation, called 'county people' to meet his grace, in addition to our own nice party. Is it not dreadful?" she asked, observing Julian hesitated giving an answer to the proposal of the drive; "is it not fearful, sitting near one of those dense icebergs, either masculine, feminine or neuter, which by the way is their most usual distinction! Positively there is such a chill damp atmosphere of cold conceit about them, that it never fails to take my hair out of curl, if I escape catching cold myself."

Julian laughed in spite of pre-occupied thoughts at ideas so much in accordance with his own; and

took the opportunity of excusing himself from the drive to Oakwood chase, though at the moment he could think of no very good plea for so doing. Lady Florence detected the subterfuge, though she appeared to receive his reasons for declining to oblige her; and abruptly left him, fearing the anger and mortification which filled her heart, might betray themselves in her countenance.

Her feelings were any thing but enviable, particularly when from a mission of *espionage* on which she sent her maid, she found that Mr. Sinclair had joined his cousin and Mrs. Stewart, in the *boudoir* of the former. The tumult of tender regret, and mortified pride, which then warred in her bosom, might have shown her the precipice near which she stood; but, alas! they only served to urge her nearer that brink, beyond which one step was utter destruction.

CHAPTER XVII.

"Cease to lament for that thou canst not help,
And study help for that which thou lamentest.
Time is the nurse and breeder of all good.
Here if thou stay, thou canst not see thy love."

As Lady Florence St. John had mentioned, an immense party had been invited to greet the arrival of that illustrious statesman and general, the Duke of Strathhaven. There was too much *eclat* attendant on even a short visit from his Grace, for Lady Clairville to omit the opportunity of showing her neighbors that Oakwood was actually to have possession of so distinguished a personage for three days, and her invitations had been distributed accordingly.

The Duke having arrived during the afternoon, had met nearly all the guests who were visitors at the house; and with his favorite, the Lady de Cressy, and two sighing *aspirants* to her favor, he had already taken a short stroll in the grounds. To one unconscious as was the young baroness, it would have been scarcely perceptible that his Grace had a second motive in seeking to be with her; but when we inform our readers that the Duke of Strathhaven and the stranger who had entered with such kind commiseration into the sorrows of the Cecil family, were one and the same person, it will be readily believed that he felt impatient at every obstacle which impeded the inquiries he wished to make, and that the exquisite persons of Colonel Irby Fitz-Irby, and Lord John Hale, were decidedly *de trop*.

The fact was, that the invitation of Lady Clairville had been only accepted at the present time by the Duke of Strathhaven as affording the means of pursuing that research which was necessary ere his benevolent intentions with regard to the Cecils could be rendered available to them. The first measure to be adopted was to establish the identity of the unhappy family at Kensington, with that of the brother of Lady Clairville, and then to gain from Lady de Cressy, or Julian, some clue by which he might learn the retreat of Captain Cecil. Experience had taught him the difficulty of gaining that information from Lady Clairville, who had shown herself at once annoyed and impracticable on the subject.

Nothing doubting that the opportunity must soon occur of pursuing the inquiries he wished, still the Duke felt anxious and even restless on the subject. Throughout his whole existence, every object in life had been followed up with an energy and constancy of resolution which had in a measure insured its

success; but now the simple circumstance which occupied his attention seemed to influence him with an ardor and zeal which even astonished himself. The claims of misery and of sorrow had ever been attended to by him, with an earnestness which the good and the benevolent must always feel in their desire of alleviating the distresses of their fellow-creatures; still this was very different to the impatience and anxiety which now possessed the duke in coming forward to the assistance of the Cecils. It was this feeling which led him to put aside unread the letters which by his secretary's orders his valet had placed before him at his toilette, while, to the great annoyance of that functionary, he hurried most irreverently through the ceremonial over which he presided.

Hastening to the state drawing-rooms, the duke found, as he expected, but a small number of the guests assembled, and had therefore the opportunity of joining the little group of which Lady de Cressy formed one, without attracting attention or exciting remarks. Near Blanche was seated Lady Florence St. John, looking more splendidly lovely than her warmest admirer had ever seen her. She was attired in a sumptuous dress of the palest pink satin embroidered with silver lilies. Her hair was confined with a lily wreath formed of the most exquisite diamonds, and on her beautiful bosom, whose Parian purity seemed increased by the ornament, hung a gorgeous cross of brilliants.

"Which Jews might kiss and Infidels adore."

But beyond the exquisite arrangements of her dress, there was a beauty in the expression of her countenance that seemed to lend rather than borrow effect. Her cheeks were slightly flushed, and a tremor on her ruby under lip, with a perceptible palpitation at her bosom, spoke of feelings which the tender radiance of her eyes at once betrayed. They were from time to time directed towards Julian, who stood at a short distance from the little party, looking cold and imperturbable as heretofore; but feeling to his inmost soul the enchantments directed against him, as well as the reproof conveyed by the superb toilette, so different from the simplicity he had often extolled.

After a conversation of nothings, which, though uttered by patrician and high-born lips, said as little as nothings should say, the Duke of Strathhaven, having vainly sought a *tete-a-tete* with Blanche, who seemed perversely in ignorance of his wishes, at length turned to Lady Florence. At that moment, a little repeater, which, composed of diamonds, formed the clasp of the bracelet that she wore, sounded the hour. In the pause, its tiny, though musical, bell was distinctly heard; and Lady Clairville, who was sitting near, begged to see the dwarf time-piece which had thus forestalled the hall clock. Nothing loath to unglove her beautiful arm, Lady Florence held its symmetrical proportions to the Duke, that the bracelet should be unclasped. One look directed to Julian seemed to say, "Why was the task not yours?"

The Duke took the bracelet; and having looked at it for a moment, passed it on to Lady Clairville, and turning to Blanche said, "I have seen a still prettier watch than this, though less magnificent. It was in the form of an aster; the petals were of the brightest purple enamel; while the gold face of the fairy watch formed the yellow centre of the flower."

The Duke observed Blanche with some scrutiny, as he added in a low voice, "I have been thus minute in my description, in order that I might learn whether you had ever seen one similar."

"Oh! yes," said Blanche, looking anxious and surprised; then turning hastily towards Julian, she called him to her, begging him to bring her from the writing-table in her *boudoir* the watch which she had left there. Julian seemed relieved by the summons, as it spared him the task of reclasping the bracelet on the fair arm of Lady Florence, which he saw his mother about to request him to do; he dreaded the dangerous proximity, and the shake it might give to new-formed resolutions. The consequence of this absence was, that the Duke was obliged to replace the glittering ornament; and Lady Florence gave Blanche credit for being even a more consummate manœuverer than herself, in thus sending her cousin away, at a moment when her reassumed influence was in some danger.

On Julian's return, Blanche almost advanced to meet him in her anxiety; and taking the watch from his hand, she placed it in that of the Duke, with an air of earnest interest. He examined it most attentively; and turning it with much curious scrutiny, he at length said, "This is certainly the counterpart of the watch I once saw. The only perceptible difference was in the initials at the back. These I see are the letters J. and B., united by a band of roses: on its twin-sister I observed the letters J. and E. united by forget-me-nots."

Julian and Blanche, who were both standing close to the Duke, involuntarily looked at each other, and seemed deeply solicitous to ask some question, though yet uncertain how to word it. The keen eye of the Duke was steadily fixed upon their countenances, and the emotion and anxiety occasioned by their recollection of a watch exactly similar to the one he described, which had been given by Julian to Evelyn Cecil, was plainly perceived by him.

The two trinkets had been made for Julian at Geneva, and he had been assured that they were not only the first of the pattern, but would most likely be the last; as the workmanship was more expensive than the apparent value of the watches seemed to warrant. How could the Duke therefore have seen one, unless it was that which he had given to Evelyn?—Could she have given it away? He felt it was unlikely, knowing how her affectionate heart had prized her every offering. Had penury obliged her to part with the splendid bauble? There was distraction in the thought, though it seemed likely to afford some clue to their present abode. Had the Duke seen her,—been in her society? It was strangely improbable; for Julian was aware that he had no acquaintance with the Cecils; and the society she must have been in to have met his Grace, was much at variance with their present circumstances, as well as with the concealment they so strictly observed. All these surmises whirled rapidly through his mind; but still he could not ask one of the questions he longed to venture. He trembled and turned deadly pale; while his embarrassment was somewhat increased by feeling that the soft, though penetrating eyes of Lady Florence were fixed intently on himself. At length he heard Blanche say, "May I ask your Grace where you saw the watch in question? I am most deeply anxious to know."

The moment was one of intense interest to Blanche; to Julian the suspense was absolute tor-

ture. With his looks riveted in anxious observance of the Duke, and awaiting his answer with breathless impatience, he was surprised to behold the grave, fixed, and almost stern countenance of the statesman strongly moved, as though by some vivid feeling. During a moment he was evidently embarrassed and a shade of color passed rapidly over his usually pale features; while he paused, evidently considering how he should frame an answer to the question of Lady de Cressy. At length he said in a hurried manner, as if desirous of putting an end to the subject, at the same time returning the watch to Blanche, "After all I may be mistaken—the watches most probably were different:" and immediately turning away, he commenced a conversation with Colonel Irby Fitz-Irby; who, considering it a point of conscience, or of love, ever to be at the side of the wealthy Baroness, was there most opportunely to answer his Grace's questions as to the quarters and qualities of the gallant Hussars whom he had the honor of commanding.

This was very provoking. Blanche felt almost inclined to revoke her admiring opinion of the Duke, and really dislike him; while Julian had been thrown into a state of agitation by this little incident which it would be difficult to describe. His ardent impetuous feelings, always high-wrought, were now in a condition of turbulent and scarcely controllable emotion. Recalled by the morning's conversation with Blanche, to much of his real and passionate attachment to Evelyn, which the blandishments of Lady Florence had rather undermined than destroyed; the mystery, in which he was certain that Evelyn was implicated, irritated his feelings to the utmost pitch. It was clear that there was some reservation, some hidden story in the business. But how could it be? How could there be any connection between his cousin and the Duke of Strathhaven, the man of all others the most inaccessible?

He was in a state of painful embarrassment, from which he was not even to be recalled by the angry looks of his mother, who had noted the whole scene, and well knew from what cause his present discomfiture proceeded.

Rage filled her bosom when she discovered that all her machinations, and the fascinations of the Circe who had so assiduously seconded her schemes, had been in an instant rendered abortive, by the mere sight and mention of a bauble possessed by the object of his youthful affections. Her anger was not the less violent, because at the moment obliged to suppress all evidences of it, except those which escaped her, notwithstanding her most powerful efforts. The truth was, that, ignorant of the events of the morning, and of the subsequent interview between the cousins, the quick and sudden renewal of Julian's sensibilities with regard to Evelyn, manifested in the past scene, seemed to evince a greater depth of passion than the pliancy with which he had yielded himself to the blandishments of Lady Florence had given her reason to suspect. She turned for comfort and explanation to her lovely ally: but her fair brow was clouded, and a look of deep passionate regret spoke her opinion of the present bad aspect of affairs.

Julian saw nothing—heard nothing—but stood lost in deep reflection, at once unmindful of the claims upon his attention due to the rapidly assembling guests, and of the singular appearance which his abstraction must present to those around.

Like a gleam of light, it had suddenly occurred to his mind that, some months ago, his mother had expressed herself as having been annoyed by some questions from the Duke of Strathhaven relative to her brother, just at the period when, all intercourse had ceased between them; and after they had learnt that the Cecils had been peremptorily forbidden by their father to hold any communication with them.

Was it possible that the kindness and interest which the Duke had shown with regard to them, had arisen from any personal acquaintance? It was unlikely; for his tasked memory enabled him to recollect that at a review, where his Grace had inspected some dragoon regiments, both Herbert and Evelyn had been disappointed on failing to obtain a near view of the illustrious warrior. Still he felt convinced that there was some mystery—some interest unexplained. The Duke's questions, as well as looks betrayed it, and Julian resolved at the first opportunity to attempt some elucidation of the affair. It is true that the grave and rather austere manners of the Duke, together with the distinguished position which he held in the world, had always imposed a degree of restraint upon him; but this must be overcome. The interests of Evelyn—the wishes of Blanche, he felt, demanded that he should seek some further knowledge from the Duke; and he trusted that the evening would afford him the occasion that he sought.

The dinner, like all magnificent banquets, was long and tedious to all those who have not an interest in the culinary fictions, and appetitive inventions of a *chef de cuisine*, as well as to those who find that the affinities have not been at all considered by the chance which has given them their right and left companions. To poor Julian, who had mentally formed a plan which that evening was to see accomplished, the repast appeared interminable. However, towards the end of all this sumptuous *ennui*, an incident occurred which seemed to both the ladies Clairville and St. John, as if a fate was busy in throwing stumbling-blocks in the way of their schemes, in the shape of reminiscences of the dreaded Cecil family.

During a pause in the business of the table, which was occupying a host of serving men in livery, besides the *maitre d'hotel*, and four equally gentlemanly-looking allies, a guest who, from a long residence abroad, was in perfect ignorance of its being decidedly against the rules of English *bon ton* to speak above a whisper, or attempt any thing like conversation at dinner, addressed Lady Clairville from some distance with this unacceptable question: "May I ask your Ladyship where your brother Captain Cecil is? Since my return to England, I have in vain sought for him at his own residence, which I find occupied by a new proprietor. I wished so much again to see him and his beautiful children!"

Lady Clairville's countenance grew dark as night at this *mal-a-propos* attempt of a good-natured man to make himself agreeable, and with forced composure she said, "My brother is abroad for the education of his family;" then addressing a question to the gentleman next her, she showed very plainly that she wished for no more discussion on that topic.

Julian started at hearing his uncle's name mentioned so suddenly; and blushed violently at the falsehood Lady Clairville uttered with such calmness; particularly as he perceived that the eyes of

the Duke of Strathhaven were fixed upon her with scrutinizing sternness, during the question and her answer. He then turned his regards towards Julian, as if to observe whether he took as a matter of course the coloring given to the misfortunes of his uncle; and Julian felt mortified in the extreme, by the tacit supposition of one, who he now felt convinced, knew the true nature of the case. It was some relief that, Lady Clairville soon rose to leave the dinner-room; and by the time the train of beauty and fashion had disappeared, he had in a degree recovered himself.

On the gentlemen again seating themselves at the table, Julian felt a little surprised by hearing the Duke call to him by his name, and in a kind and courteous manner request him to take the vacant seat by his side. The circumstance seemed to offer too great a facility for his making the inquiries which he had determined upon, for him to hesitate an instant; and he joined his Grace with much alacrity.

Prefacing his conversation with some apology for what at first might be deemed ill-timed curiosity, the Duke at once begged that he would give him some information concerning the Cecil family; adding, that circumstances had transpired which had given him a peculiar interest in their affairs; but that the services he was anxious to render Captain Cecil could not be available unless he was acquainted with his present place of abode.

There was so manly a conciseness in the Duke's words, yet at the same time so much evident solicitude and sincere benevolence; that Julian's heart opened immediately; and anxious to show confidence in one who manifested such good-will towards those he so dearly loved, he unhesitatingly gave his interrogator every detail that was in his power. Those details consisted of the history of his uncle's pecuniary embarrassments, and the rupture with his sister; the removal of the Cecil family to some retreat which they had vainly sought to discover, and the believed fact of the unhappy father's flight to France.

Julian was much agitated when he had to touch upon the unfeeling conduct of Lady Clairville, and the consequent cessation of all intercourse between the two families; but his natural ingenuousness forbade him making any reservation in his relation; and the Duke's penetration easily discovered that the fear of her son's forming a connection with the poor, but beautiful Evelyn had been one of Lady Clairville's incitements to her unsisterly conduct; while he at once perceived what cogent reasons she had for the fear.

There was a pause for many minutes; at length the Duke said gravely—"Do you mean me to understand, Mr. Sinclair, that with the anxiety which you express to discover the place of your cousins' residence, you really find the thing impossible? I should have conceived that, with your knowledge of their affairs and connections, the research would not have been one of difficulty. Have they no other relations—no man of business to whom you could apply?"

Julian explained that Mr. Disney, of Berner's Street, Captain Cecil's solicitor and agent, had decisively refused him any information on the subject, adding, moreover, that he should conceive he was not fulfilling the wishes of his client, if he did not at once apprise the family of any endeavor to discover their retreat, in order that they might take

further measures for concealment. Julian also informed the Duke, that the venerable mother of Captain Cecil was still living; and had been applied to on the occasion: but she at once declared her ignorance on the subject, telling them that all her communications, as well to her son, as to his family, passed through the hands of Mr. Disney.

"This is a very perfect system of incognito, and more precise than the occasion seems to necessitate," the Duke said with some surprise; and then added with an expression of anxiety, "Does the dear Mrs. Cecil still reside in that beautiful cottage on the borders of Riversdale forest?"

Julian replied in the affirmative, wondering much at the knowledge evinced by the Duke of his grandmother's abode, and ignorant, that from her desire of ministering to the distresses of her son, the exemplary mother had given up the residence which for so many years had formed her happy home, and had removed to one immediately contiguous, but considerably inferior in size and adornments to that which she had left.

The Duke remained some moments in serious and abstracted thought; at last arousing himself from his reflections, he said, "Mr. Sinclair, you will think that I am disposed to make most impertinent questions this evening, and yet your candor is rather to blame in the encouragement it offers me. But there is one thing I wish to ask, and which the passionate interest you evince in the welfare of Miss Cecil, rather disposes me to doubt. Are you engaged to your cousin the Lady de Cressy?"

"Oh! do not distract me by such a surmise," Julian exclaimed impatiently. "It is true, that my mother, from the force of wishing, actually believes that our union will take place; but it can never be. Neither Blanche nor I have the slightest inclination to the alliance, even were not our affections differently placed. Neither are our hearts quite mercenary enough to sacrifice their deepest feelings to worldly considerations."

"I believe you from my heart," the Duke said warmly, as rising from the table, they proceeded to quit the dining-room; "and I entreat you to consider me in the light of an interested friend, as well for your own sake as for those whose cause our conversation has shown me you espouse so earnestly."

Julian, delighted and amazed, felt as if he was under the delusion of a dream. It was one, however; which left him soothed and comforted, for knowing the great influence which the Duke of Strathhaven might exercise over his mother's mind, he augured the happiest results from his interference in his behalf. He did not however accompany the Duke to the drawing-room. A sense of committed weakness led him to doubt himself, and dread at once the beauty of Lady Florence, and the reproaches implied rather than spoken, with which he guessed he should be assailed by one who had some reason to accuse him of inconsistency. Besides this, another motive actuated him. Whilst in conversation with the Duke, the thought had occurred to him that they had too lightly given credence to the elder Mrs. Cecil's words that she was in ignorance of the abode of her son's family. Was this natural, when there could be no reason for the concealment as far as regarded herself? Was it not more likely that the unfortunate Cecils had sought an asylum with her? and although Blanche was in

the constant habit of communication with her grandmother, the silence with regard to those who wished concealment was of course the system she would pursue.

The idea once formed, a tumult of hope and anxiety rose within the bosom of Julian. He resolved immediately to proceed to Riversdale, in the fond expectation of there meeting those so dear to him. He had a twofold motive in wishing to depart without any delay; the ardent hope which the Duke's assumption of Mrs. Cecil's knowledge of her relation's residence had led him to form, and the desire of escaping the expostulations of Lady Clairville, who he judged would be rather vehement on the occasion. He did not acknowledge to himself that he was also anxious to avoid another interview with the too dangerous Florence; but retiring at once to his study he gave orders for his travelling carriage to be got in readiness, determining to proceed a stage on his journey that night.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"A woman moved is like a fountain troubled,
Muddy, ill-seeming, thick, bereft of beauty."

BLANCHE looked eagerly for her cousin when the gentlemen entered the music saloon on quitting the dining-room, as the agitation and abstraction of his manner during dinner had made her feel anxious about him. She watched in vain, and though some time elapsed, still no Julian appeared. She passed into the drawing-room, where she heard Lady Clairville ask several times for him, and beheld Lady Florence, with a flushed cheek and agitated glances, evidently watching for his appearance, although she affected to be listening with complacency to the flattering speeches of Lord John Hale, who, having confided to Colonel Fitz-Irby his opinion, that Blanche de Cressy was decidedly in love with the Duke of Strathhaven, was now what he called "backing out" of the imputation of having paid her attentions.

The continued absence of Julian at length rendered Blanche so nervous and uncomfortable, that she was resolved to seek him in his study, where she knew he sometimes hid himself when wearied with the party in the drawing-room. At the door of the music saloon, however, she was met by a servant, who with rather an air of mystery put a note into her hand. She hastily read these words.

"Come to my study, dear Blanche. I wish to have a few moments' conversation with you before I leave Oakwood. The carriage is waiting for me."

Blanche lost not a moment in obeying the summons, and in a few seconds had joined her cousin. He immediately accounted for this hasty departure by describing the impression he had received of the possibility of finding the Cecils at Riversdale. Blanche was not surprised at his deciding to leave Oakwood, as she had perceived his intentions rather pointed that way in the morning; but she could not see the necessity of so hurried a departure. However, he answered her objections by exclaiming rather impatiently,—

"Blanche, I can bear this artificial existence no longer, where one's better feelings are hid—are smothered by the tyrannous exactions of one imperious individual. I must go. Besides, if I remain here, I subject myself to the coquetry of Lady Florence; and much as I detest myself for it, still, I

confess—I confess with shame—that, while under the influence of her extraordinary beauty—her excessive fascination of manner, she gains a dominion over my better nature which, as you said this morning, is a sin against my true and real affections.”

Blanche was convinced by his reasons, and rejoiced that he had thus prudently made his determinations; but still she said—

“My dear Julian, do you forget the Duke? How can you thus abruptly leave him?”

“It is on this subject I wished to speak to you,” he replied. “I have written to him, and I think he will forgive the slight, in consideration of my motives.”

Julian then repeated the whole of the conversation that had passed between himself and the Duke; and while Blanche listened with much surprise to his account of the extreme interest his Grace had evinced for the Cecil family, there was a beating at her heart, a sanguine glow of hope, which seemed to tell her that she too might look to him as a friend to her wishes regarding those beloved cousins.

“And now, dear Blanche, you had better return to the drawing-room,” Julian said, as he bent, and gently kissed her forehead. “We must say adieu for some short time. My mother will doubtless be in high anger, but it cannot be helped. The Duke goes on Monday, and on that day I believe our party will, in a great measure, disperse. Dear Blanche, I need not ask you often to visit my poor father. He loves us both, though his mind seems alienated from every other idea. Now farewell, my darling Blanche! the carriage is waiting in the stable-yard.” And affectionately embracing her, the impetuous and quick-resolving Julian had vanished before the bewildered girl could utter another word.

Lady Clairville was indeed exasperated when she learnt that her son had so abruptly taken his departure, and Blanche gladly quitted her side to deliver to the Duke the note which Julian had confided to her. He looked surprised, and turned to a table on which a lamp stood to read its contents. Blanche, whose eyes were most attentively watching him, fancied she saw any thing but displeasure in his manly and expressive countenance. He raised his eyes after having perused the note, apparently for the purpose of seeking Lady Clairville, and encountered the fixed and anxious gaze of Blanche, which was riveted upon him. She blushed deeply when she discovered that her scrutiny had been observed; but her embarrassment was dispelled by his saying kindly to her as he passed to join Lady Clairville in an adjoining apartment—

“I must find your aunt, my dear Lady. Mr. Sinclair has commissioned me to clear him as far as I am concerned, from any want of courtesy in thus leaving us. He has explained his reasons in a most satisfactory manner.”

The evening, to those interested in the late event, passed on with clouds and *ennui*, which latter ingredient seemed to impart itself in a measure to all the inmates of Oakwood. Lady Clairville was most vehement in her expressions of displeasure. The sudden departure of Julian filled her with apprehension as well as anger. In vain the Duke endeavored to appease her wrath, which to him she attributed solely to the impropriety and disrespect her son had betrayed in thus having left his Grace. She would not—she could not be reconciled to the outrage.

And Lady Florence, how did she brook this

slight—this signal evidence that her attractions had made but a trivial impression on the heart of one she believed she had wholly won? It appeared that the deceiver was the deceived—the subjugator, the one subdued. Her vain, but warm heart was now writhing under the pain of the self-inflicted wound. She had, indeed, played with edged tools; and a game begun in very wantonness of spirit, had ended in far too serious a manner for her own peace. The toils laid for the unsuspecting Julian, had been the means of her own entanglement. She had felt this, but still took no pains to disengage herself, rather hugging to her bosom the chains which she fancied she might throw off at pleasure. It is true, things had come on very gradually. At first it was but the quiet admiration which every woman would feel, at witnessing such marks of love for the absent object of his attachment: and, to the ardent-minded Florence, it was beyond measure touching to behold so young, so noble a being, with the whole world before him and all the world’s advantages, subdued and humbled, willing and anxious to sacrifice everything to the one shrine at which he worshipped. And what was the object of his idolatry? A fair girl, poor and friendless; though he was surrounded by dazzling beauty which smiled upon him, and had riches, splendor, and rank at his command. This was all very striking—very interesting, and at first Lady Florence viewed it in that light alone. But then came her own excitable feelings—her unstable principles—her vanity and self-love; all corroborative of passion which took possession of her. She had from the first warmly admired Julian; soon she loved him with all the violence of an ungoverned heart. She was encouraged by his mother to seek his society; and quickly perceiving that the enchantment of her smiles could not even be resisted by his preoccupied mind; but, that they extended by degrees the impression which her feigned sympathy had first made, she freely gave herself up to the intoxicating sentiment which assailed her, without once giving a thought to the future.

Mr. St. John had only remained at Oakwood a few days; therefore his wife had been left without the slight restraint which even his seldom-regarded presence might have imposed. Lady Clairville had arranged opportunities and invented reasons for *tele-a-letes*, which kept her son and lovely guest in constant communication, and produced an intimacy too consonant with the wishes of the latter. She gave herself up to the happiness of the present moment; and in the society of the attractive Julian, forgot that pleasure founded on passion is but as durable as the sand-based tower.

Julian was now gone! The intelligence still sounded in her ears, and her untamed heart was filled with the madness of disappointment. The spoilt child of prosperity, she was the living example of the baneful effect of that constant indulgence which ever foment impatient desires—creates sensibility to the slightest cause, and raises wishes which no fruition can satisfy. By a round of selfish gratifications the feelings are left acute to every disappointment. Hence, the gale which another would scarcely feel, is to the self-indulged, a rude tempest; and as is told of the effeminate Sybarite, the rose-leaf, doubled beneath them on the couch, breaks the rest of those who only consider enjoyment and unholy pleasures.

Florence, whose sin certainly did not lie in dis

simulation, in vain endeavored to conceal the chagrin and passionate regrets which were jarring in her inmost heart. She remained silent and abstracted on a couch, which even her most approved cavaliers hesitated to approach, so deep was the sadness expressed by her pale countenance.

Blanche exerted herself, as she was wont for the sake of others; but it was to no purpose. The evening passed heavily to those, she wished to enliven; and fatigued with the irksomeness of conversing with those to whom no other feeling than courtesy drew her, it was a welcome relief when the party at length broke up, and she found herself alone with her good governess.

Lady Florence, too, hailed with some degree of satisfaction the privacy of her own chamber; not that she expected to find either peace or comfort, but at least it offered concealment to the violent burst of grief which every minute she found more difficult to restrain. Quickly disrobing herself of her splendid dinner dress, she bade her maid give her her *douillete* of violet-colored satin, and then dismissed her. With hands clasped on her beating bosom, groans, rather than sobs, issued from her trembling lips, and there was a sense of desertion and outraged affection at her heart, which seemed as though it would overwhelm her. At that moment, a tap at the door a little recalled her to herself. It was Lady Clairville's maid, requesting from her lady that she would repair in a few minutes to her dressing-room. Scarcely knowing what she did, Lady Florence snatched the silver lamp that was burning on the chimney; and gliding hastily along the corridor, entered quickly and without ceremony the apartment of her friend. For an instant she paused at the door, as if irresolute whether or not she would advance; the rays of the lamp making visible a countenance actually transformed by angry emotions, and rendered in appearance still paler by the violet-colored wrapper which she wore.

Lady Clairville, who was also in her *robe de chambre*, reclining in a *faisseuil* by the side of a bright fire, which an autumnal night rendered necessary, actually started when her eyes fell upon the countenance of Lady Florence; its expression was so totally altered. Averse that she should perceive her surprise, she begged her to enter; and, turning to her maid who was in attendance, made her place another chair and then withdrew. Lady Florence sunk into her seat without uttering a word, and the two friends were left alone.

There was something striking in the scene which the interior of this fairy apartment presented. The beauty of its decorations, the chastened light of the alabaster lamps, which shed a subdued tint on every object around; and moreover, the striking beauty of the lovely women, who, in their becoming undress and the partial obscurity of the chamber, offered subjects far an artist's pencil. Lady Clairville with her dark and brilliant eyes, her raven hair, and the flushed expression of her countenance, offering no bad representation of an inspired Sibyl; while the soul-struck Florence, as she sat with her unclosed lips, distended eyes, her fair disheveled ringlets hanging in disorder about her pale agitated face, and waiting as though in terror, for what she was yet anxious to hear, seemed the very personification of one who had sought oracular instruction.

They sat in silence for some time. At length it was broken by Lady Clairville, who in a voice

hoarse with vexation and disappointment, exclaimed, "How is this, Lady Florence! So all my hopes, and the well-acted drama in which you played so important a part, seem to have ended in a failure. How is it? Has there been any misunderstanding—any blunder? You know you had *carte blanche* from me for any device; and plan you liked to pursue. I cannot help thinking this flight of my ungrateful son," and she spoke with insolent bitterness, "is rather a slight on your Ladyship's attractions. It would seem to be an easier affair to become the fashion of a London season, than to enchain the wandering feelings of a boy of two-and-twenty. However, I have made up my mind to one thing;" and here the demon of fury seemed to pervade the whole being of the mother,—"I will no longer trust to pretty faces and empty *minauderies* to gain that influence over a son's actions which his duty fails to give me, and he may live to rue the change in my plans."

She paused for a moment, waiting some reply from Lady Florence; but she sat speechless, though an angry flash in her deep blue eye seemed to betray that she had heard the words addressed to her. Lady Clairville then continued, "Next week I shall go to town and take with me my unfortunate husband. His increasing infirmities render some alteration in his will a necessary consideration. I have already spoken to him upon the subject, and I will see if, by that measure, I cannot bring the perverse Julian completely into my power; at least it will prevent the ruined fool from marrying that Cecil girl."

"He will never marry any other," Lady Florence replied, in a low tone of voice and with a fearful effort at calmness; "He will never marry any other while this youthful and deep-rooted love exists, and while Lady de Cressy is in the way to watch over him."

The latter remark rather soothed Lady Clairville, who herself had fancied in the evident marks of displeasure displayed by Blanche at Julian's devotion to another, some symptoms of the attachment she had wished her to entertain.

"With regard to the degree of influence which Blanche de Cressy may exercise over her cousin I can never be dissatisfied; but I must confess, Lady Florence," the still angry mother exclaimed, "I am surprised to hear you talk such nonsense—such excessive folly, as to speak of the deep-rooted love of a young man who, for the last few weeks, has lived but in your smiles, and whose time and actions have been perfectly devoted to you. I see nothing in this constant lover—this paragon of fidelity—but a wilful boy, with passions as unstable as his actions."

"You quite mistake the circumstances," Lady Florence replied, whose comparatively gentle nature appeared perfectly subdued by the raging spirit before us. "Your son liked my society, and may have admired my person; besides which, few young men can withstand the flattery of attentions from a married woman, particularly when those attentions have evidently a deeper source than the mere love of conquest. But your son never loved me: admiration, and the love of which his ardent heart is capable, are very, very different in their nature. No, Lady Clairville, while my whole soul has trembled beneath the influence of a newly-awakened passion, Julian has numbed its every feeling by uttering some regret for his lost Evelyn."

The mental anguish of the impassioned Florence here burst forth, and rising from her chair with her

clasped hands pressed on her bosom as though she would still its tremulous throbblings, she exclaimed with vehemence—

"Yes, Lady Clairville, it is I who am the sufferer. I gave love, ardent, devoted love, for levity, familiarity, and now desertion! But it is well; perhaps I deserve all I endure, in suffering myself to be made a tool in your hands—in attempting by a criminal and destructive sentiment, to alienate his affections from a pure and legitimate object. And now to the torture of finding the feelings which I fancied I had awakened, were shallow and unreal, are added your reproaches, your 'unfeeling' taunts—you, Lady Clairville, who threw me in the midst of temptation—you, who bade me be the companion, the seducer of one too dangerously perfect in mind and person. Now hear me,—hear me confess that I, a wife, a mother, madly, devotedly love your son! Yes, Lady Clairville, my peace of mind is gone for ever. I return to my home a degraded being, and bearing also in my mind the consciousness of having lent myself to deceit and perfidy. Yes, this is your work: but listen to me; no blessing will ever attend your views whilst you use such means for their futherance."

Lady Florence turned to depart, and Lady Clairville, who was speechless from surprise and rage, whilst her dark eyes were flashing with a fierce and terrible expression, could scarcely find utterance to detain her. At length she said.

"This language is insulting—is absurd from you, Lady Florence St. John—you, a woman of the world, one whose levity has been the talk of many a London season. You must be acting this little scene for my amusement, to divert my mind from the vexations which oppress it."

She paused, and for a minute regarded Lady Florence, who was leaning against the mantel-piece; her face was shaded by her hands, and her whole form shook with emotion. Lady Clairville perceived that she had gone too far; and by an effort suppressing the anger which had moved her, she said in an altered tone of voice—

"Yes, indeed, my own sweet friend, I must think that you are merely jesting; but forgive me, I was wrong, most faulty in giving way to a momentary vexation, which your positive assertions produced. Sit down, my dear Lady Florence," she continued in a tone of gentleness calculated to soothe the chafed spirit of her hitherto devoted friend, and attempting at the same time to take her hand; "sit down and listen to me with your usual kindness and forbearance. We have still some work to do; your loveliness must yet 'lure this tassel-gentle back again.'"

"No, Lady Clairville, I will hear no more. I have heard—I have done too much already. I have avowed a weakness which a woman should die sooner than confess, and you may solace yourself with the reflection that it is your mighty hand which has worked all this. You have added another to the victims which your imperious will has rendered unhappy."

Thus saying, this wayward child of impulse rushed from the room. Deep sobs burst from her bosom, and with streaming eyes she was rapidly gaining her own apartment when she suddenly encountered Mrs. Stewart, who, after attending her pupil to her room, was now retiring to her own. Her surprise was great at meeting Lady Florence thus agitated, and at such a time. Her kind feelings could not resist the impulse which urged her to inquire if she

could be of any use; but Lady Florence, with a start of impatience at the rencounter, hastily motioned her to proceed; and gliding past her, sought the refuge of her own apartment.

Here her sufferings amounted to absolute torture; abortive anger at neglected, unrequited passion forming their principal feature. Alas! the time when reflection might have shown her the dangerous path she was seeking, had been trifled fruitlessly away. Having once allowed her strong passions to gain the ascendancy, she had been hurried by them into the midst of a torrent, by whose impetuosity she was being borne rapidly to the fearful gulf beyond, and experienced too late there are no chains so galling, no fetter so heavy, as those which bind the heart to the errors and corruptions in which it has once indulged.

CHAPTER XIX.

"Happy is England; I could be content

To see no other verdure than its own,

To feel no other breezes than are blown

Through its tall woods with high romances blent."

BLANCHE, who had heard of the agitation in which Lady Florence had been met by Mrs. Stewart, the next morning looked for her appearance at the breakfast table, with some degree of anxiety and curiosity. She felt so great a dislike to her general character, that even to her kind heart, the idea of her sufferings imparted no feeling of commiseration, although they had been so piteously described by Mrs. Stewart. Without much penetration, it was easy to divine that her griefs arose from temper and passion; and Blanche surmised justly that some discussion with her aunt had roused this ebullition of emotion.

It was Sunday morning, and Lady Clairville, who considered the proprieties of life as much as the most highly principled could do, and was generally the earliest on that day, had suffered all her guests to assemble at the breakfast table before she joined them.

Through the disguise of her softest manner the experienced eye of Blanche, when she at length joined them, detected many symptoms of storm within; and her hollow eyes and trembling hand seemed to speak of a sleepless night. Still she conversed cheerfully and much; and turning to Lord John Hale, who blushed with great juvenility at the soft impeachment, said laughingly—

"I fear, Lord John, you lost your heart last night to my charming friend, Florence St. John: and how will you support the information that the poor darling has been obliged to leave Oakwood suddenly? We all know her excessive love and anxiety for her beautiful boys, and therefore ought not to wonder at her flying to them on the wings of maternal tenderness, because a letter this morning announces the appearance of the measles in the next town—at least I think it is the next town, but I am sure it is quite as near."

There was a general smile at the *naivete* with which Lady Clairville spoke of her friend's excitable fears; but Blanche's blushes were as deep as Lord John's, the falsehood of her aunt seemed so wanton and unnecessary. However, one truth was announced, the hurried departure of Lady Florence.

It was Lady de Cressy's general rule to walk to church when the weather permitted; and whether she walked or went in the carriage, she always

arranged to be accompanied by Mrs. Stewart. A slight autumnal rain this morning called for the attendance of her phaeton and ponies; and preceding the rest of the guests with her attached governess, she left the religious portion of the party to find their way in the different carriages provided for their use.

The reason for this *empressment* was her wish to secure for her valued friend the seat which she had always been accustomed to occupy for so many years next to her. She felt that thus kneeling in the act of devotion by the side of this excellent woman, to whom alone she owed the inestimable blessing and comfort of religious instruction—who had first taught her infant lips to move in supplication to her God—that her prayers flowed more freely in the presence of one whom she knew to be the very soul of piety and goodness.

The Duke of Strathhaven was among the number of those who that day visited the humble village church; and when the party were preparing to re-enter the carriages which were to convey them home, said kindly to Blanche, "My dear Lady de Cressy, as the rain has entirely ceased, would you not prefer walking back to Oakwood, through the Park? I should be too happy to be your escort."

Blanche most gladly availed herself of the proposal; and Mrs. Stewart having ascertained that the shoes of the Baroness were equal to encountering the still humid earth, though her own were not, the Duke and his youthful companion proceeded on their way; not, however, without a look of significance directed by Lord John to Colonel Fitz-Irby, who had professed in the strictest confidence that he still thought he should "distance his Grace."

There is ever an irksomeness in the commencement of a *tete-a-tete*, when it has been desired for a special purpose by both parties, as in the present case. Blanche had anxiously desired a private interview with the Duke that she in her turn might speak to him of the cousins, in whose welfare Julian had told her he evinced so great an interest; but there was a delicacy in the subject, which, united with the degree of awe, in which she had been accustomed to regard the Duke, gave an embarrassment to her feelings, which kept her for some minutes silent, as they turned into the Park.

The Duke, on his side, experienced a degree of constraint, though less perceptibly so than his companion. But, while it was concealed beneath the usual gravity of his manner, he internally marvelled that such should be the case, and sought to account for it, by supposing that it arose from averseness to speak to the proud Baroness de Cressy of relations in poverty and discredit. He therefore discoursed on different topics, and the beauty of the surrounding scenery afforded him ample subject. This was a point on which the interest of Blanche was speedily awakened; she assented with pleasure to the justice of his remarks, and offered her own with that enthusiasm which her love for the country usually awakened. On her observing that, if the view of English woodlands, clad in their bright autumnal tints, were so universally objects of admiration, how infinitely more must the American forests delight the eye! the Duke replied, "I think not, my dear lady; for even the most prejudiced of American tourists do ample justice to our island scenery, and I can fancy that the immensity which you believe adds so greatly to the effect, rather diminishes by its indistinctness. Talking of Americans, reminds me of Washington

Irving's description of English park scenery. He says, 'there is nothing more imposing than its beauty. Vast lawns, that extend like sheets of vivid green, with here and there clumps of gigantic trees, heaping up rich piles of foliage. The solemn pomp of groves and woodland glades, with the deer trooping in silent herds across them; the hare bounding away to the covert, or the pheasant suddenly bursting upon the wing; the brook taught to wind in the most natural meanderings, or expand into a glassy lake; the sequestered pool, reflecting the quivering trees, with the yellow leaf sleeping on its bosom, and the trout roaming fearlessly about its limpid waters; while some rustic temple, or sylvan statue, grown green and dank with age, gives an air of classic sanctity to the seclusion.'

Blanche was delighted with the quotation; adding, that there was so much graphic fidelity and beauty of expression in the description, that it in a measure enhanced the beauties it so eloquently depicted.

"As far as regards my own taste," rejoined her companion, "though the assertion may lead you to doubt my possessing any, I must confess I prefer English village scenery to the most exquisitely composed parks in the kingdom. A rustic parish like Oakwood, on a Sunday, above all, offers to me the most interesting of spectacles. What a delightful sight it is, when the bell is sending its silver melody across the quiet fields, to behold the peasantry thronging tranquilly along the green lanes to their church! It is this sweet home-feeling," added the Duke with a deep sigh, "that is, after all, the parent of the purest enjoyment and the steadiest virtues. Oh! how unlike the feverish pleasures afforded by the world! The happiness enjoyed in the peacefulness and seclusion of the country

— Wants no witnesses —
But its own sharers, and approving Heaven;
That, like a flower, down hid in rocky clefts,
Smiles, though 'tis looking only on the sky."

Blanche regarded her companion with unfeigned astonishment. She could not believe that such poetical ideas and reflections could flow from lips so grave, or a heart which she fancied to be entirely devoted to diplomatic affairs. The Duke perceived her look of surprise, and smiled.

"I see, Lady de Cressy," he said, "that you imagined me to have long outlived the age of romance, and my ideas to be all so centred in the serious realities of life and of state affairs, that my heart must be deadened to the beauties of nature, as well as to every softer feeling. But believe me, my dear young friend, although my life has been passed in busy commotion of one sort or another; it has been one little consonant with my natural tastes—a perpetual warfare of circumstances against human feelings. My heart, I would fain believe, was created for softer emotions, but the path into which I have been thrown has been one of tumult and agitation. It has furrowed my brow, and imparted a sternness, which, in truth, is at variance with the real disposition of my heart, that, I trust, is in better keeping, and beats with the same feelings which warmed the bosom of the young Walter Fitz-Henry, though I now bear about the furrowed front and care-worn visage of the Duke of Strathhaven."

"It must—it does," exclaimed Blanche with emotion; for the words of the Duke, uttered in a tone of voice as mournful as it was musical, sunk deeply into her heart, and created a feeling towards her of

affection as well as veneration. She knew that, although born of a noble family, his present exalted rank had been conferred upon him in consequence of his brilliant achievements during a long and arduous military career; but she had never before heard him revert to his early days, and the mention of the a. with the evident regrets of the titled warrior were to her inexpressibly affecting.

They walked on for some time in silence, both apparently absorbed in deep reflection. At length it was broken by the Duke, who said, "Lady de Cressy, you appear to enjoy the country so much, that it must be a source of regret to you to leave it."

"Yes, I always quit it with sorrow; but formerly there were redeeming pleasures in London which made me regret the country less," and here Blanche sighed.

"Now at such a time, of the year, with weather so beautiful, you will scarcely find any friends in town," the Duke remarked.

"We never go until February—and till that time we shall not have much fine weather to regret," Blanche replied, a little surprised at the Duke's words.

"But Lady Clairville has since breakfast informed me, that she, with all the family, go to London on Tuesday, not to return to Oakwood this season," the Duke rejoined.

Blanche was all astonishment; but she felt little sorrow at the event. Her mind was in such an unsettled state, that any change was preferable to the calm dull feeling of neither hearing of, or acting for those upon whom her thoughts were so constantly bent. She was for a moment silent, reflecting upon what she had heard, but soon added again, sighing, and, as it were, thinking aloud, "It does not however signify; in London I shall be as desolate as I am here."

She paused and blushed, for she perceived the Duke's penetrating gaze fixed upon herself. They were now rapidly approaching the house, and a few steps would have brought them to it, when the Duke requested that their walk might be prolonged, expressing an anxiety to see a new hermitage which had lately been erected in a little wood in the park. Blanche, who now felt an additional interest in the presence and conversation of her companion, acceded to his wish with pleasure; and, drawn by the irresistible influence of his benevolent and courteous manners to greater intimacy, she pursued her walk with an absence of restraint very different from the feelings which had usually marked her interviews with one so distinguished by situation and talent, as the grave-looking Duke of Strathaven.

"Your cousin's hasty departure has, I fear, greatly incensed Lady Clairville, and I imagine that I am in some degree the cause. Had I not been unfortunately here, her ladyship's displeasure could not have been so serious."

"Indeed," Blanche replied quickly, "I believe that my aunt would have been equally angry, had not your Grace's presence made Julian's sudden departure even more ill-timed. Poor Julian! he is a creature of impulse, and his temper and patience have been much tried. Indulged to the utmost as a child, and since his feelings have matured, thwarted in his dearest hopes, his mind is unprepared for the opposition he has now to encounter. I love my cousin with all the warmth of a sister's affection, still I see his faults and deplore them. He will be

every thing his friends can desire, if his affections are allowed to take their natural bent; but if forced and perverted, Heaven knows what will become of him."

The Duke looked with scrutiny at Blanche. The suspicion had once crossed his mind that she loved Julian; but, in her open countenance and firm tone of voice, he plainly perceived that Evelyn Cecil had no rival there. Though totally dissimilar, he could not help almost equally admiring the two interesting cousins. Blanche had not the angelic beauty of Evelyn to attract, but an exquisite mind evinced itself in her expressive countenance; and sparkled in the eyes which, shaded by long dark lashes, had a deep and melting look. Her mouth and teeth were faultless, yet still, unless exercise or feeling brought the color to her cheeks, she would, to a casual observer, pass by unnoticed. But though the radiant loveliness of Evelyn attracted and fettered the attention, there were moments when Blanche might even have eclipsed her; while the purity of her mind, the excellence of her principles, the warmth and benevolence of her heart, rendered her equally an object for love and devotion. There was the same high and open forehead perceptible in all the cousins, and it seemed to tell of the Cecil pride which beat in the heart beneath. Indeed, in the manners of the young Baroness, there was a degree of haughtiness which repulsed those who knew her not; but it extended no farther than manner—the heart was all warmth and tenderness within.

"Lady Clairville does not hear very often from her brother, Captain Cecil, does she?" inquired the Duke.

"Never," was the laconic reply of Blanche.

"Perhaps you are not aware, Lady de Cressy, that I feel a warm and anxious interest in that unhappy family? But," the Duke added, after waiting a few moments for an answer from his companion, "perhaps you take the same view of the subject as your aunt, Lady Clairville, and it is painful to you."

"It is indeed painful to me," Blanche replied: "but not as you suppose. I feel bitterly for them, and it is a case of deep sorrow to me; oh! how unmitigated, when I consider that the common kindness of kindred might have spared them so much misery. And I, with all my riches—gold which is hourly heaping up for me,—to be tied and fettered as I am. Powerless as the beggar who stretches out his hand and asks for charity. And two long years are before me ere I shall be free, during which time every wretchedness may occur. But I must beg your Grace's pardon; I am imposing too much of my grievances upon your notice. You have touched upon a topic which always rouses my feelings, and have spoken of my cousins with a kindness that at once opens my heart."

"My dear Lady de Cressy, make no apologies, I beseech you. I honor you for your warm-hearted support of those you love," the Duke replied quickly, then with some slight hesitation, added, "I know a little of Miss Cecil; I have also seen her eldest brother; and I can easily imagine how dear, how valued they must be to those who have the advantage of greater intimacy with them."

"Oh, sweet Evelyn!" exclaimed Blanche, "she is indeed to be loved! so good, so beautiful! In purity and guilelessness of heart, in elevation of mind, who indeed is to be compared to her?"

"And Herbert," inquired the Duke,—"is he equally excellent?"

"He is indeed," and here Blanche turned away her head as if struck by a sudden consciousness.

Before this name was mentioned, her earnest eyes were fixed upon the Duke with animation and openness. But the magic sound of this one name caused the eyes to drop, the lips to quiver, and the averted countenance was suffused with a bright crimson.

The Duke apparently took no notice of this change, but seemed determined to make himself master of every feeling of the family.

"Do tell me, Lady de Cressy," he continued, "something of the prospects of young Cecil. We are talking confidentially, and I pray you to look upon me not as the stern diplomatic minister, but as the truly anxious friend of the Cecil family. A friend, in short, who is desirous of proving himself such by deeds as well as words."

Blanche turned towards the Duke, her eyes and countenance brilliant with animation, and taking his hand, she seemed as though she would press it to her lips; but in an instant as if ashamed and frightened at the act to which her feelings impelled her, she quickly relinquished it, and turning away burst into tears. They were, however, tears more of delight than sorrow, and had the Duke's countenance at this moment been observed, greater symptoms of emotion might have been detected than this redoubtable warrior would have perhaps wished to betray. Gratified by the confidence and gratitude the enthusiastic girl had evinced, he said in tones the most friendly and encouraging—

"My dear lady, you must not make me a half-confidant. Tell me most unreservedly how you think I could benefit the family. My interest of course is great, and I will exert it to the utmost of my power. Tell me what would be your plans for them, and I may assist you most successfully."

Lady de Cressy then spoke, and she had now conquered all hesitation.

"Herbert was most anxious to go into the army, and was educated with this view; but the deranged state of my uncle's affairs precludes the possibility of maintaining a son in the military profession, even could he procure his commission. My wishes are these:—Your Grace, I conclude, is well aware of the extent of my hitherto useless fortune, and my desire is to raise a sum of money which I will engage to pay, with any interest upon it, when I come of age. With that I may relieve my uncle from his difficulties. Herbert can enter the profession for which he is so well calculated, and my poor aunt, restored to the husband of her affection, may again smile in happiness upon her beloved children. Oh, what delight is in the idea of the joy of such a re-union! Can you assist me in this scheme, my dear, dear Duke?" cried Blanche, clasping her hands in supplication as she almost knelt before him.

The Duke looked upon the warm-hearted girl with tender admiration, but he shook his head, and was thoughtfully silent. At length he said to the impatient anxious Blanche, who watched his countenance in an agony of suspense,

"My sweet young lady, part of your wishes shall be realized immediately. Mr. Cecil shall have a commission in the Guards without loss of time; and he shall not lack the means of support in the service. But the other part of your wish is too serious a matter for me immediately to comply with. I must consider before I answer."

"Then with many, many thanks for your Grace's

kindness, I must decline for Herbert the offer you have made. My cousin cannot be under any pecuniary obligation to a stranger," Blanche added with a deepening color, "and of his own family I alone am in the situation to offer it."

"You are a most extraordinary family," replied the Duke, looking at the almost indignant girl with a smile. "The same proud blood flows alike in all your veins." He was continuing the subject when they were suddenly joined by a party of loungers from the house, which, to the regret of both, interrupted the interesting interview.

CHAPTER XX.

"Hope comes again to this heart long a stranger,
Once more she sings me her flattering strain;
But hush, gentle siren, for ah! there's less danger
In still suffering on, than in hoping again."

AFTER the preceding conversation, the warm-hearted Blanche was more than ever occupied with the idea of the service she might render the Cecil family. This had been long the subject of her most anxious consideration; but alone, and unaided, she had never known how to set about her labor of love. Her every feeling was engaged in their cause; and now, with such a powerful coadjutor—so influential an adviser, she felt cheered and full of hope. Her young heart swelled with delightful anticipations in store for those she so dearly loved; so buoyant, so elastic are the hopes of the young. A cloud, however, came over the bright prospect when she reflected upon the proud spirit of her uncle. How would it be possible to induce him to accept pecuniary assistance? From a stranger, that would be quite out of the question; but from herself—where could be the objection? She, who in some future day might be their child, for such indeed was the day-dream in which she fondly indulged. She felt—she hoped that she was loved by Herbert, although the great difference of their situations caused him, in her belief, to conceal this feeling even from himself.

"It will be strange if I am to be the wooer—if I am to seek the hand of Herbert," she thought, blushing vividly at the reflection. "But no matter my intentions—my wishes are pure—are founded on reason, on virtue. It may be my fortunate destiny to save from utter ruin those who are so deserving of a better fate; and to what other more precious use could I apply my otherwise valueless wealth. Wealth, which hitherto has been to me only a sorrow—a golden fetter, and which I know to be a fearful cause of responsibility to those intrusted with it. God grant that I may not draw upon myself judgment by a selfish appropriation of the talent which is lent to me! On all sides I look round and shrink from the feelings engendered by the unlimited indulgence which wealth affords; and if happiness is in truth connected with it, how comes it to pass that many humble individuals visibly spend their lives with more comfort than those who occupy the higher departments of life? The splendor of retinue—the influence of rank—the gratification of high consideration; are, in themselves, indeed alluring; but once familiar, what are they? How feeble are the pleasures in which the heart has no part! and, oh! may mine be at once preserved from the *ennui* and the dangers which riches throw into one's path! May I be furnished with an antidote to the poison which is too often mixed in the intoxicating cup of prosperity!"

These reflections were passing in the mind of the nightly-gilded heiress, as she sat in her beautiful *boudoir* whither she had retired at the conclusion of her interesting walk with the Duke of Strathhaven: but though surrounded with all the inventions and tasteful devices of luxury, her heart was simple, and as untouched by the baneful influence of artificial enjoyments, as though her days had been passed in rustic seclusion; it had indeed so strong a shield of innate modesty and good feeling that the world had failed in perverting it. She was formed for the innocent pleasures afforded by piety and friendship and all the good affections of nature; yet at the same time she possessed the strength and firmness of character so essential to her position in the world.

With her head resting upon her hand, she was considering how it would be possible to gain another interview with the Duke, who she knew left Oakwood the next morning, and was absorbed in such deep meditation that Mrs. Stewart entered almost unheeded. Seeing that her beloved pupil seemed disinclined for conversation, she quietly took up a book and began to read; but Blanche was perfectly aware of her presence, and turned her eyes for some moments upon her placid benevolent countenance, without speaking. At length she said, in so quick a tone of voice it almost startled her governess, "Dear Mrs. Stewart, have you not some money in the funds?" She was answered in the affirmative.

"How much, dear friend? Answer me quickly."

"About four thousand pounds," Mrs. Stewart answered with looks expressive of surprise.

"Then you must lend it to me immediately,"

Blanche replied, with anxiety expressed in her countenance, and with hands clasped in supplication.

Mrs. Stewart, who was naturally a nervous timid person, was astonished, if not alarmed, at the unusual vehemence and agitation of her pupil, and inquired, with some degree of trepidation,—"But, my dearest child, what use can you possibly have for so large a sum of money?"

"Mrs. Stewart, are you unwilling to let me have it? Can you not trust me?" Blanche exclaimed, almost indignantly, all the pride of her nature rushing in a moment to her countenance. And then added, in a plaintive tone of voice, "Are you too, like the rest of the world, every thing that is friendly—every thing that is kind—until you are tried upon the one point? Say the magic word 'money,' and the hollowness of all worldly professions is proved as by a touchstone. I really believe the amputation of a limb is scarcely a more formidable evil to contemplate, than the extraction of money from the purse. Distress is compassionated and relieved in some degree; people are liberal of sympathy; and we do not unfrequently see sacrifices made towards the unfortunate, of time, and even of personal comfort; but when it comes to the bare probability of pecuniary assistance being required, then show me the friend that will stand firm, and I will look up to that person with respect and veneration as 'one in a thousand.' However, Mrs. Stewart," rapidly continued the impetuous Blanche, not allowing her poor friend to speak, although she vainly endeavored to be heard; "you shall have pledges of equal value to the sum which I must still request you to lend me;" and advancing hastily to a cabinet, she unlocked it and took from a secret drawer a casket of

jewels, which she held towards her governess. Mrs. Stewart burst into tears.

"Lady de Cressy," she said, as soon as she could command her voice, "this is not like you, to doubt so cruelly the affection of one who would readily make any sacrifice to you, to say nothing of a few paltry pounds gained mostly in your own service—your own money, in short. Take it all. I merely asked the question through surprise at its suddenness, and you are not wont to withhold your confidence from your faithful friend."

Lady de Cressy threw her arms round Mrs. Stewart's neck.

"Forgive me," she said, "forgive your wayward Blanche; but my mind at this moment is much agitated, much perplexed. The money is to assist my uncle, and Herbert—in short, the whole family. Our sudden departure to London, will be a means of furthering my wishes. It will enable you to procure the money, and I trust I may be able to convey it to them through the medium of the Duke of Strathhaven. So imagine, my dear Mrs. Stewart, how opportunely your kindness—your loan presents itself. That shall be repaid the first opportunity; but your kindness never, never can be properly returned," and Blanche embraced her devoted governess as much from an emotion of gratitude as delight.

A cloud appeared to hang over the dinner party that day; and all in a greater or less degree seemed affected by the constraint visible in Lady Clairville's manner. Her countenance was marked by coldness and haughtiness; and although she endeavored to fulfil her duties as hostess with the same high-toned courtesy which usually distinguished her, still a frown was ever contending most fiercely with the bland smile that habit had taught her to assume. Her attentions were chiefly directed towards the Duke, so much so that Blanche, who during dinner had been longing for the evening that she might seek some opportunity of speaking to his Grace, found her aunt's monopoly extremely *mal-a-propos*.

At length, after watching his every movement with anxiety, which drew the remark from Lord John Hale, who had observed it, as well as the attentions of Lady Clairville, "That in the event of the paralytic old lord's demise, there would be a dead heat between the aunt and the niece for the dukedom," Blanche saw the Duke pass into an adjoining apartment for the purpose of directing a frank for a lady. She immediately followed, saying, with almost a blush at her own manoeuvring,

"I am come also to trouble your Grace."

The lady received her cover, and after lingering in chat a few moments—sauntered away. Blanche most eagerly seized the opportunity, and said with a countenance of such earnestness that the Duke's attention was immediately commanded—

"I am going to intrude upon your Grace, by asking one of the greatest possible favors. Will you call upon me in Grosvenor Square, next Saturday! And let it be before twelve o'clock, as my aunt does not leave her dressing-room before that hour."

The Duke could scarcely forbear smiling at the new position in which he found himself placed. He had ever been, it is true, acting for the good of others through a long life of care and toil. Self had been his last motive and consideration. He had negotiated treaties, he had called congresses, he had baffled the intrigues of crowned heads, and

had served his country by his arm and by his counsels so as to call down upon himself that country's acknowledgments; but never until this moment had he been called upon to assist lovers in distress.

"I am growing old," thought he, "so my occupations, I suppose, are taking another character; and this, if nothing else occurred, ought to awaken me to the truth that I am no longer young; otherwise, this interesting girl, so good, so pure, would have shrunk from the idea of making an appointment with me. However, no matter," and here a deep sigh interposed in this long train of thought, "no matter, my love's young dream is over."

Perhaps if we could pursue the chain of his ideas much farther, we might find them hovering over the form of a fair girl, whose lovely image had made an impression upon his mind, which his strong sense in vain attempted to shake off.

Blanche continued, "You are so kindly interested in the welfare of my uncle and his family, and I feel so persuaded that you know their place of residence, that I am going to solicit you to pardon a presumptuous request. Will you have the goodness to convey to them a sum of money, which by Saturday I shall have in my possession?"

The Duke looked grave, and was silent for some moments. He then said,

"This is rather a perplexing business. I am not fond of secret missions, and, my dear Lady de Cressy, although I admire the feelings of benevolence which you betray, yet is all this right? Is it fair to your aunt? does she not claim your confidence? Is it fair to Captain Cecil, who, I am told by Mr. Sinclair, has most peremptorily forbidden the least communication between your cousins and yourselves? And how is it that you can obtain a sum of any importance without her knowledge?"

"Your Grace," replied Blanche, with a heightened color, and an air of wounded pride, "need not fear that I should compromise myself or my own dignity by the manner in which I have obtained this money. I know too well what is due to the name I bear. My kind governess, who has lived with me for years, has lent me the money. She trusts me most implicitly, but I have jewels of considerable value which would secure her from loss in the event of my not living to the age of, twenty-one. The Cecils must be relieved. You, my dear Duke, have caused a gleam of light to shine upon my perplexities. You will, you must, assist me, for the sake of that sweet Evelyn, whom, if you have once seen, you must admire and pity."

"Tell me only how you contemplate assisting them, and I will do my best endeavor to aid you," replied the Duke, more than ever enlisted in the cause which Blanche so anxiously advocated.

"Well, then, first my uncle must be enabled to return to his family. They must retire to Riversdale in however quiet a manner; there they will be respectable and happy, and then—" here Blanche's voice faltered, she turned pale and red by turns, and a tear trembled in her eye as she continued, "I trust your Grace will not condemn me as wanting delicacy if I openly express sentiments which women in general are desirous of concealing, but to a friend like yourself I have no hesitation in avowing my affection for Herbert Cecil. If the confession is unmaidenly, I trust the difficulties of my position will excuse it. I wish Herbert to know it; for although I feel assured of his attachment, he is too

proud to confess it, or to seek a union with one so much his superior in the mere accident of fortune. But once his wife, my present idle wealth might be directed to the happiest purposes—that of reinstating his family in the comfort in which all who know them must wish to see them."

The Duke was sensibly struck with the noble candor of the blushing girl before him, yet felt that she had done well in thus putting her cause into the hand of a third person: the hope passed through his mind that he might be instrumental in forwarding her wishes. However, he forbore to make any comment, and after a short pause, asked,

"Your cousin Julian is also deeply attached to Miss Cecil, is he not? May I ask, does she return his love?"

"Oh yes," Blanche answered quickly; and then as if speaking from a second thought, she added, "at least I think she does; but I am not so sure of her attachment as I am of his. She indeed loves him tenderly; yet at times I have thought it too much like the kind of feeling which she evinces towards her brother. But Evelyn is younger than I am, and she has had no doubts, no fears to contend with. Julian has never made a secret of his love, while Herbert has always endeavored to conceal, and indeed to extinguish every preference he might have for me. One word more, I pray, for I see my aunt coming towards us. Will your Grace contrive to see me on Saturday?"

The Duke had only time to give a hasty consent for Lady Clairville joined them, and seating herself by his side, said with a forced smile to Blanche, who was withdrawing—

"Really my niece is very *exigente* in thus monopolizing your Grace's attentions. You must let me claim some share, as we are all to part so soon."

The truth is that Lady Clairville had been watching for some time, the deep interest with which Blanche was speaking, and the attentive ear the Duke lent to all she said. Her curiosity as well as suspicion was excited. What could this extreme of intimacy portend? She was tenacious of every attention which Blanche received from any quarter save one, and she now thought it highly advisable to interrupt a conversation of such extraordinary interest and excitement as the one she had just witnessed. She was rendered still more anxious upon the subject by observing Blanche's flushed cheek and animated eye. She scarcely knew what to think. The Duke was not at all past the age of attraction, with a person strikingly noble and prepossessing. He was a widower with an only son. Was it for himself, or for his son that he was so animatedly, and, as it appeared, so successfully pleading?

Speaking from the impulse to which her thoughts had given rise, and thinking that by some adroit question she might learn whether the Duke really had any views for his son, she inquired of him—

"Where is the handsome Lord Fitz-Henry just now?"

"My dear Lady, you might as well ask me the movements of the antipodes: Fitz-Henry's plans and flittings are so uncertain, that they almost give him claims to ubiquity. He was in Scotland for the grouse shooting, and I know proposed being in Yorkshire on the 1st of September; but I have not heard of him for the last three weeks, and, as far as my knowledge goes, he may really be at Grand Cairo."

"You ought to marry Lord Fitz-Henry, and sober him," said Lady Clairville laughingly, but with a scrutinizing look at the Duke. "A wife would perhaps be as ballast to so vagrant a personage."

"I do not interfere in such matters; they are far too serious, and impose more responsibility upon the meddler in such affairs, than I would willingly undertake," said the Duke gravely. "Besides, Fitz-Henry is young, and unfortunately has not much vocation for the life of a married man."

The words of the Duke were so far satisfactory, that Lady Clairville judged no intercession had been made for the dissipated Fitz-Henry. But was the Duke as free from plans on his own account? The examination was a more difficult one, inasmuch as it approached personality; moreover, there was a greater anxiety, and of course it was less easy to sustain the necessary *nonchalance*. Only second to the primary object of her life, the union of Julian with Lady de Cressy, was one lately added to the plans of aggrandizement which were ever agitating the ambitious heart of Lady Clairville; it was no other than her own marriage with the Duke of Strathaven.

She had small foundation for such a scheme; nothing stronger than the visibly approaching end of her invalid husband, and the increase of interest which it was evident the Duke took in her family. If this proceeded from love to Blanche, it foretold a double disappointment; and the growth of cordiality between them almost bade her tremble for her own hopes.

After a short pause, which was essential to gain that indifference of tone, without which her words would betray too great an interest, she said, "By the way, my dear Duke, I was told the other day, that you were yourself thinking of matrimony. Let me see," she added, as if recalling, instead of inventing some gossip, relative to his Grace, "let me see, who was your supposed choice.—oh! I remember, it was the fair widow, Lady Clifford."

The Duke coldly smiled, as he said, "I believe that I once have spoken to her; but, Lady Clairville," he added with more earnestness, "do you believe that one so young and lovely could stop in her career of mirth and happiness, to think of a man of my age; and one who, from care and toils of mind, as well as body, probably looks at least ten years older!"

"Never doubt it, your Grace; and without you really wish to be accepted, never hazard the offer. What woman could refuse the Duke of Strathaven; he upon whom the admiration of the whole world is showered?"

The Duke looked disappointed. It seemed to Lady Clairville, that either he disliked the idea of owing any matrimonial success to his rank and honors, or else that Blanche had shown some averseness to his suit. If the latter, now was the time at once to destroy the idea that she could ever favor it; and altering her voice from a tone of railery to one of extreme pensiveness, she said, "Alas! these matrimonials, they cost me no little share of anxiety. You know of the attachment of my son to his cousin Blanche,—you know that I trust soon their marriage may be accomplished,—and still this wayward boy leaves us with a suddenness that might well offend his affianced bride, and certainly it much hurts me."

"Are you so certain of a mutual attachment between the two cousins?" inquired the Duke.

"Oh! yes, why should I doubt it? Indeed," she added, lowering her voice to a confidential pitch, "I really believe that it was a love quarrel which made the impetuous Julian leave us so abruptly. I know that he is very jealous of Colonel Fitz-Irby's attentions to the Baroness; and I know also, that he had a scene with her yesterday before dinner: put that and that together, as the old ladies say, and I think we can account for his melancholy during the repast, and Blanche's perturbation on finding he had really escaped."

The Duke made no comment on her words, but changed the subject with a gravity and coldness of manner, that confirmed Lady Clairville in her idea of his views. The conversation lingered on but a very few moments. Both seemed occupied by thoughts that were not to be spoken; and the approach of a third person offered at length a very seasonable interruption.

CHAPTER XXI.

"As the most forward bud
Is eaten by the canker ere it blow,
Even so, by love, the young and tender wit
Is turned to folly; blasting in the bud,
Losing his verdure, even in the prime,
And all the fair effects of future hopes."

Who has not remarked that the month of October, in London, is ever dismal. That the deserted streets, the closed houses,—the shops *en dishabille*—the solitary carriage—in short, that every thing proclaims that the season of pleasure and business is over? A universal dullness is spread over the vast city. Even the hackney-coach horses, surfeited with leisure, have time to doze upon their stand. The porters and link-boys starve, or grow fat with inactivity; and, indeed, from the highest to the lowest, all feel the miseries of inaction.

To be alone amongst a wilderness of houses, the view of heaven obstructed, from our gaze, the very atmosphere we breathe loaded with the corrupted air of a large city, is a refinement on melancholy. If we are to be alone, let it at least be with nature, where we may breathe the pure air of heaven, and survey the beauties of creation; where every instant some sense of enjoyment may be experienced, though it be experienced alone. Solitude is never so irksome as in those haunts which we have at other times seen filled with the tumult of diversion or business.

It was thus Blanche thought, as she sat at the window in the drawing-room of Lord Clairville's mansion in Grosvenor Square, watching the deepening gloom of an autumnal evening. Her heart was heavy, and her every reflection was sad. The past failed in offering any recollection untinged with some shade of grief, and with regard to the future she felt anxious and unhappy. She had heard from Julian at Riversdale, where his hopes of meeting the Cecils had met with acute disappointment. He mentioned the altered style in which the elder Mrs. Cecil lived—for which circumstance he surmised the true reason. He had one hurried interview with the suffering old lady, from whom he could gain no further information than that her son was abroad, and that his family were living in the strictest seclusion somewhere near town. She knew not the exact place, as all their letters passed through the medium of Mr. Disney. With this scanty clue, he told Blanche he should again commence a strict search in the neighborhood of town; and it was

with the faint hope that he might have some tidings to communicate, that she was now watching for his approach the second evening after their arrival in town.

Julian had taken up his abode in lodgings near his club, as offering more independence; and for which the absence of his family from London had offered a pretext, though they had followed him so closely. Blanche deeply regretted this for many reasons, and it formed one, among the many causes which filled her bosom with dissatisfaction, as she sat watching every distant figure which she saw moving towards the house, hoping that each was her truant cousin.

Without being an egotist, Blanche could not refrain from musing on her present position, which, splendid as it appeared to others, offered little pleasure or advantage to herself. She could not help arguing that had she been born less the favorite of fortune, her life, though different, would have been happier. Her aunt probably would not have sought the trouble of being her guardian, but most likely she would have been consigned to the charge of her loved and excellent grandmother. With her how happily might her days have passed, in peace, in contentment, in the enjoyment of innocent pleasures, and those country pursuits from which she had ever been debarred! How different was the actual state of things!—The affections of the heart all stifled, its weaker and minor powers all brought forward by the importance attached to the trifles of life. Brought up in a continual glare of dissipation and useless folly, surrounded by persons whose conduct she condemned, Blanche could not help at the moment feeling thankful that she had so far escaped the pollution of their tastes and habits, and was grateful towards that kind friend, the excellent Mrs. Stewart, who had been so staunch a counsellor to her, and had warned her of the perils which lurked in her path. She felt that her much-loved cousin Julian had been less fortunate, and she trembled for him lest the force of education and example, unaided as he was by the watchful care of one whose advice he would value, should enervate his mind, and render his character less firm, less upright, than it had promised to be: and although she knew, and had witnessed from the beginning its excessive love for Evelyn Cecil, still, on that point too, she began to doubt his stability when she reflected on the complete and sudden ascendancy which Lady Florence had gained over his mind.

At this moment a quick knock was heard at the hall door, and the next brought Julian into the room. He looked unusually pale, and there was a constraint and distance in his manner to his mother, which Blanche thought probably arose from some misgivings he might have as to his reception. Lady Clairville, however, commanded her feelings, and the meeting passed off quietly, although with mutual coldness.

To Blanche he was affectionate as usual; and as soon as she could gain his private attention, she inquired eagerly if he had had any success as to his second search. Her disappointment and surprise were great when she perceived that, on asking this question, Julian's countenance betrayed a mixture of confusion and agitation. He answered abruptly, evidently wishing to put an end to the subject—

"That as yet he had found very little opportunity to do anything in the matter."

Blanche looked at him with painful scrutiny, from which he appeared to shrink with a consciousness that he had called for it. Her warm heart felt chilled, and tears of disappointment filled her eyes. Julian quickly perceived that her feelings were wounded. With the kindness of a brother he again approached her; and although the presence of Lady Clairville and others prevented their having much private conversation, he contrived by his attentions to soothe her; and before they parted, it was arranged that they should take a long ride together the next morning.

Blanche did not confide in him her plans and expected interview with the Duke. With her usual tact and good sense, she felt that Julian's interference would rather mar than aid her wishes, and much delicacy was required in the management of the affair, when her uncle's sensitiveness and extreme pride as regarded all pecuniary matters were considered. Julian, she knew, would be the first to come forward with every guinea he could command; but she was also well aware that with Captain Cecil's tenacious feelings, he would rather submit to any thing than receive assistance from him. Indeed, there was some reason for this delicacy, as she knew that her uncle more than suspected Julian's attachment to his daughter; and was also aware of the decided opposition that it encountered from Lady Clairville. Silence, therefore, upon the subject, she conceived to be the wisest plan to pursue.

There was some reason for the visible uneasiness in Julian's manner; and since he had left Oakwood, his vacillating mind had been sorely tried.

Lady Florence St. John had certainly made a vivid impression upon his fancy; and while her beauty, her voice, her manner, all embellished and matured by worldly experience, had dazzled and allured him, flattery, like some subtle enchantment, had opened his whole heart to her. This poison had been instilled most dexterously and effectively; still, however, his affections were devoted to Evelyn, though his imagination was excited and his mind disturbed by the wiles of one too dangerous for his peace.

He believed that once out of the sphere of her fascinations, he should be safe; and making a desperate effort to shake off her chains, he fled; but in the solitude of his travelling carriage, when the first excitement and hurry of departure was over, he shuddered with dismay to find that he had broken rather than extracted the shaft which had wounded him, and that a portion of it still rankled in his bosom.

He could not forget the beauty of those radiant melting eyes, which were so often fixed upon him with impassioned tenderness; and as he thought of the expression of her countenance as he had last seen it, so full of disappointment, annoyance, and grief, he blamed himself as cruel—as unmanly, for having treated her with such coldness during the few last hours that he had been in her society. To dispel these reflections, he endeavored to think of Evelyn; but her image presented itself to his imagination, as if a thin cold cloud overshadowed her brilliancy, and there was something in her remembrance too chaste, too unimpassioned for his present state of mind. Yet even through the mist of his heated imagination, which presented her surpassingly fair, though so cold, she was in a measure eclipsed by the radiant beauty of one who had with

pered feelings to his heart that it had never before experienced.

Julian travelled all night, and arrived at Riversdale fatigued in mind and body. The result of his visit has been told; all that remained to him was to retrace his steps, and he proceeded to London with the same expedition which had marked his whole route.

If we could look into the hearts of those whom the world call happy, how different should we often find the reality from the appearance! In the midst of prosperity and success, some secret care, the disappointment of some darling hope, or even the languor and disgust which sometimes attend satiety, and destroy the relish of pleasure, may be as real and active evils, as destructive of happiness, as those sufferings which are generally the objects of compassion. Julian, the favorite of nature, the spoilt child of fortune, heir to rank and wealth, in his own person proved the insufficiency of outward things to produce peace and contentment. On arriving in town late at night, he was so perfectly unhinged by the mere force of unquiet reflections, that refusing the invitation of one or two young men whom he found at the club, to dine with them, he retired to rest, and proved that bodily fatigue was an excellent opiate even when the heart was disturbed by two loves.

The next morning he awoke composed and tranquil. On comparing his state of mind with that of the preceding evening, he began to think that there was nothing like a long and hurried journey with change of scene, to destroy unwholesome impressions, and alter the tone of excited feelings. Julian felt with almost a sensation of relief that it might now be easy for him to cast off the weight of the rosy chains which a short time before he had been disposed to hug with phrenzy. He got up full of good intentions. He decided upon taking every possible method of discovering the retreat of the Cecils, and formed several plans which might facilitate the object he had in view. The more he thought upon the subject, the more anxious he became. Evelyn's image began now to rise before his mind with its usual aspect, all smiling innocence, and chastened beauty.

While at breakfast, his servant, whom he had sent to Grosvenor Square, to see whether any letters waited for him there, entered and placed two before him. One he saw immediately was from Blanche. He opened it hastily, and found a few hurried lines merely announcing their expected arrival in town. The second letter was also in the hand-writing of a female, and he paused with a sensation of trepidation ere he broke the seal. The presentiment which made every pulse within him thrill with undefined feeling, was true. The letter was from Lady Florence St. John. He felt that it would be painful to attempt a perusal of the epistle in the presence of others, and where he would be liable to interruption; he therefore hastily retreated to his own lodgings, and at once commenced reading the closely written pages.

It was a most singular composition, and was written during the night after he had quitted Oakwood; but composition is a wrong term to be applied, for if ever any thing claimed the distinction of being the natural expression of feelings flowing without thought or study from the pen, this letter surely did. The woman of fashion and of conse-

quence—the courtly beauty, proud of her power and attractions, nowhere appeared; but the warm-souled Milesian—the ardent and impetuous Irishwoman, brought up amidst scenery wild as her own untamed spirit, and left with all the feelings of her nature to grow up unchecked, spoke in every line. The whole history of her actions and impressions during her stay at Oakwood was fully disclosed, with a candor at once fearful and desperate. The share that Lady Clairville had in her conduct was also completely detailed; her reasons, and the consequence which had so naturally ensued; still her own feelings were but slightly touched upon. However, passion was, as if unconsciously, betrayed in every line. There was a pathos—a heart-rending tone of misery throughout the whole which moved the very soul of Julian, and he proceeded with a burning cheek and trembling lip in the perusal of the letter. Her last interview with Lady Clairville was next told in words which painted such anguish—such utter hopeless despair, added to the angry writhings of a soul bruised by the hand which should have soothed it, that at the moment, Julian almost cursed his mother, who could thus taunt with reproaches the victim and instrument of her schemes, at the moment when she was so bitterly expiating the sinful folly which had led her to engage in them. This was the concluding part of the letter, in which there was an evident attempt at calmness, more touching, perhaps, than the most labored description of agitated feelings could have been.

"I have now shown you that I, a designing coquette, in the hands of an ambitious woman, gained by art the influence I at one time exercised over your mind. To her I have avowed, that while luring you to a criminal flirtation, to call it by no harsher name, I have myself conceived feelings that can end but with my existence. There is but one other degradation for the abject fallen Florence. It is to tell you, Julian, that I love you. I need say no more. Love, in a bosom, ardent, tender, and hitherto untouched by passion, may be conceived; its force requires no description. I have but one thing to ask—to demand of you. It is not for your heart. The woman who avows her own, before she has received the assurance of another's love, rarely gains—perhaps does not merit it; at least, so the harsh unfeeling world would think. But I ask you to come to me. I must see you once more. My tortured and wounded heart must be soothed by you. It is your lips that must tell me, I must forget you; it is from your lips I must hear that your heart is another's. You must teach me how that calmness may be gained, which will enable me to pass through the world without outraging it by the storm of passion warring within me. Come to me, Julian, I entreat you. For the chance of again seeing you, I feel that I could stake all in this life besides. Dream not of refusing me. It would madden me, and lead to acts that you would deplore to your last hour. I know Mr. St. John has expected you at Marston for the last week, therefore your visit will excite no surprise. Julian, you *must* come!"

This letter was a complete *bouleversement* to poor Julian. His heart beat most painfully, every nerve in his frame vibrated with emotion. What was he to do? How act in such a position? He felt that all he had read was wrong, imprudent, nay, even criminal: but still the aggressor was the loveliest of women; and it was love, deep and absorbing

love for him, that had led her to sacrifice every feminine scruple, and forget that, in owning her affection, she owned her shame. He was in a tumult of feeling, truly pitiable, and which seemed to destroy every power of reflection. He felt that he was upon the verge of a precipice, and that necessity rather than inclination forbade him turning from it.

Was he to answer the letter? He must—but in what manner?—how address one who had written words which, like living fire, had bid his heart burn within him? It was torture to tell her that he could not join her at Marston; yet still he dared not be unkind—he must be tender of feelings so devoted, so impassionate, which in a manner imparted their ardor to his own. He commenced many letters, which by turns were destroyed; at length he despatched one, unsatisfactory to himself—at once too tender and yet too cold. The only part of the affair which afforded him any satisfaction on reflection, or in which he acted with some degree of firmness, was having refused for the present to go to Marston.

His plans for the day were wholly frustrated, and he lounged about the streets after the completion of his letter, unmindful whither he went or whom he met; returning to the club-house at length, that he might again peruse the epistle which had so discomposed him. There he encountered some acquaintances, and accepted their proposal to dine early with them for the purpose of visiting one of the lesser summer theatres. Indeed, the only relief he felt from the variety of feelings which pressed upon his mind, was in the noisiness and conviviality of these *merveilleux*, who, considering themselves as privileged anomalies in thus being found within the bills of mortality in the month of October, when pheasants, festivities and flirtations were all awaiting them in the country, indemnified themselves for the privation by astonishing the audience, and turning the heads of the actresses at the Olympic or Adelphi theatre, which they honored with their titled presence. Not that Julian found pleasure in the thing; on the contrary, it would have annoyed and incensed him on any other occasion; but now it prevented thought, and therefore was chosen as the lesser evil.

It was in the frame of mind brought on by the circumstances just related, that Julian appeared before his cousin in Grosvenor Square, and we must cease to wonder at his being absent and dejected. His plans relative to the Cecil family had been wholly frustrated, and it was only on Blanche interrogating him that he recollected what they had been. He felt abashed in her presence, and at a loss how to conduct himself. Was he to confide all to her? Conscience said no;—still it was with a sort of half-resolve it should be so, that he asked her to ride with him, knowing the long interview would give him the opportunity.

In the morning, very soon after he had breakfasted, and while reflecting on what Blanche's comments would be, should he, during their ride, intrust her with the whole of Lady Florence's desperation and imprudence, a note was put into his hands. It was from the object and sole occupier of his thoughts. He opened it with breathless impatience, and found only these few lines.

"For your own sake—for my sake—come to me. I shall expect you from twelve till midnight,

"FLORENCE.

"3, Belgrave Square,
Thursday morning."

CHAPTER XXII.

"Yet beautiful and bright he stood,
As born to rule the storm!
A creature of heroic blood,
A proud, though child-like form."

THAT there are few men who have not experienced in their own persons, how perfect is the separation which a difference of profession and politics causes to those who in early life may have met with intimacy, if not with affection. It was thus with the Duke of Strathhaven and Captain Cecil. At one period of their youth, few days passed without their meeting, and the residence for a short time of the gallant and noble-minded boy at a clergyman's in the neighborhood, was considered by the young Herbert Cecil as a rare pleasure and advantage. It was during one of those days of exploits which they loved so much to spend together, and which the boyish Fitz-Henry enjoyed as much as his elder friend, that the latter, falling from a tree where he was seeking the nest of a jay that had levied tribute on his mother's garden, was immersed in the deep fish-pond on the borders of which the bird had established itself. Entangled in weeds, and stunned by his fall, he must inevitably have perished, but for the prompt and courageous assistance of Fitz-Henry, who, though less, and scarcely hoping to be of service to him whom he ventured to save, plunged, heedless of self, into the deep and muddy water. His cries, and manfully exerted strength, were the means of saving his nearly suffocated friend; and they were both extricated from their perilous position at the moment when their powers were fast failing, by some workmen who had heard the fearful cries of the alarmed Fitz-Henry.

The noble daring of the courageous boy was the subject of much admiration to the whole neighborhood of Riversdale, but none felt it more deeply than the grateful heart of Herbert Cecil; and it gave a warmer coloring to the affection he already entertained for "brave little Wat," as he called his young friend.

This ripening friendship, however, was soon and completely checked. Walter Fitz-Henry was removed to the military college, there to commence a career as unexampled in valor and distinction, as the renown and honor which it gained him. Nearly at the same time the young Cecil entered the navy; and being immediately ordered to the American station, where he remained many years, even the occasional meetings, to which at parting they had pledged themselves, were rendered perfectly impossible.

Time passed on: Herbert Cecil had his share of peril and warfare, though he failed in attaining the honors which seemed to strew the path of his more fortunate friend. For years they never met. At length, at a levee, which Captain Cecil attended soon after obtaining his promotion and subsequent to his marriage, he beheld his "brave little Wat" in the form of the distinguished Sir Walter Fitz-Henry; who, Generalissimo of the forces in Spain, stood, covered with medals and orders of every description, receiving universal attention, and the tributary homage of a crowd of admiring friends and acquaintances.

Captain Cecil, in his turn, approached, while his heart throbbed with pleasure at the encounter. He extended his hand to grasp that of the idolized hero. It was taken.—faintly pressed.—and a few kind words of every-day courtesy passed the lips of the

once blunt and warm-hearted Walter, but nothing further. Captain Cecil retreated. He felt hurt and almost incensed at the *sang froid* with which he had been recognized; when, in truth, from the extreme alteration in his person, he had not been recognized at all. He never surmised the fact; that for the last hour the lion of the day, the courted and be-laurelled warrior, who divided attention with royalty itself, had been receiving and acknowledging so many new-found friends and self-presented acquaintances, that all were confounded in his eyes; and he returned from court unconscious of the heart that had sprung to meet him, or the wound he had inflicted on his early friend.

Sir Walter departed again for Spain, and Captain Cecil saw him no more, until he again beheld him as the Duke of Strathhaven,—the stern, unbending Tory minister.

Captain Cecil's views on every matter, whether of foreign or domestic policy, were strictly liberal, and rather advancing than behind the spirit of the age. To him, as well as to his party, the opposition to reform, shown on almost all questions by the Duke, appeared the prejudices of uncompromising aristocracy.

Added to this, when he observed the cold demeanor, the grave unsmiling front, ever preserved by his Grace, and not knowing that these were the signs of a heart dissatisfied with the worldly ambitious throng which surrounded him, or aching with domestic cares and paternal disquietudes, Captain Cecil pronounced to himself that, though identical, the proud Duke of Strathhaven was in many important particulars most different from the frank and once-loved Walter Fitz-Henry. He now avoided, rather than sought any further recognition. The Duke observed this in two or three instances, and as he had become aware of the identity of Captain Cecil with the friend of his happiest days, the slight hurt and grieved him; while unconscious, moreover, that the advance had once been made, he sighed as he encountered what he conceived one other proof of the powerful effects of party spirit. It caused no angry emotion; for he well knew how he was abused daily by the public press; how his best intentions were perverted—his wisest acts misjudged; and he guessed this had weight with the patriot spirit of the Whig sailor. Neither did it remove the pleasing recollections connected with the name of Cecil, which circumstance had drawn him to the splendid assemblies at Clairville House. However, he was in every respect too much a public man, to let private feelings usurp the consideration of the graver concerns in which he had embarked; and long before the time when the appearance of the lovely brother and sister so singular in circumstances, and so attractive in exterior, had excited his dormant sensibilities, all thoughts and remembrance of Captain Cecil had passed from his fully occupied mind.

It has been shown how anxious the Duke of Strathhaven had been to befriend the distressed orphans, as he first believed Evelyn and Edwin to be; and the additional claim he conceived they had upon his services, when the funeral of the little girl revealed to him their real name. The surmise of their connection with Captain Cecil in no measure smoothed the way towards gratifying the benevolence of his nature in relieving them; for he well knew the proud spirit of their father in his youth, and his subsequent coldness had made him rather doubt

the dispositions of his matured years. It was through the cousins, Lady de Cressy and Julian Sinclair, that he could alone learn aught of them, and so be enabled to form his plans. His interviews with them, however, speedily enabled him to arrange them, and on quitting Oakwood, the Duke proceeded at once to Riversdale, there to renew his acquaintance with the elder Mrs. Cecil, and to devise with her means by which his generous wishes might be rendered effective.

Many and powerful were the feelings which pressed upon the statesman's heart as he retrod, for the first time since his boyhood, the old familiar paths which led from the inn where he left his carriage, to the cottage where so many happy hours had been passed. Forgetting, almost, the long lapse of years, and all the momentous and chequered incidents which had filled them, on inspecting each well-known spot where the then young Cecil and himself had so often strayed, he felt again the boy. There was the mill-stream in which they had paddled their canoe; there was the deep woody ravine where they had waited so patiently through the long winter's day for the rarely-found woodcock; and there was the well-remembered elm tree, from which his affrighted eye had beheld his friend precipitated. All intervening time was forgotten, and he entered the beautiful and ancient oak portico, twined as of yore with creeping plants, lovely even in their autumnal coloring, with almost the same buoyant spirits with which he had ever been wont to seek his friend.

The answer at the door was one which deeply distressed him. The cottage was let to strangers; and Mrs. Cecil had resided in a smaller one at a short distance ever since the misfortunes of her son. Thither he immediately proceeded. He was considerably affected as he made himself known; but there was so much unfeigned pleasure evinced at his visit, and such cheerful resignation shown, regarding her own infirmities and the distresses of her son, that the Duke forgot he was not again talking to Mrs. Cecil in her own elegant cottage, with all the world smiling upon her, and upon her children. They talked at first of bygone days; and the disaster of the jay's nest was not forgotten. Again his prowess was extolled; and sooth to say, the general who had led squadrons against the imperial army, felt more pleasure in the grateful mother's eulogium, than in all the "flattering unction" which his splendid victories had drawn down upon him. At length he led the conversation to the present situation of her son and his family, and the manner in which he had become acquainted with it.

Mrs. Cecil thought with him that there would be some difficulty in inducing the fastidious pride of Captain Cecil to receive pecuniary assistance either from his niece, the Lady de Cressy, whose generous wishes on his behalf were mentioned, or from the Duke. "Besides," she added with a smile, "you know Herbert has a right to consider himself aggrieved by you. Since your cold reception of him at some levee, an age back, he has never spoken of you but as the illustrious commander, of whom every one talks, whether as strangers or acquaintance."

The Duke looked surprised, begging her to explain, which she was enabled to do, from the circumstances having been minutely related to her on their occurrence. She had never seen the affair in a serious point of view, and had remonstrated with the morbid delicacy of her son, which prevented him

again seeking a renewal of acquaintance with his once much regarded Walter Fitz-Henry. Of course she now readily understood how the affair had happened, from the Duke's assurance that never, to his knowledge, had he spoken to her son since they first parted at Riversdale.

It was not too late for the explanation now to be offered; and Mrs. Cecil undertook, at the Duke's request, that it should be fully cleared up as far as a letter could avail; and she pressed his hand with fervent gratitude, as he kindly and earnestly said, "I trust, my dear madam, that we may soon have the opportunity of a more satisfactory communication with your son. We must indeed have him in England *bon gre ou mal gre*."

This introduction of the Duke of Strathhaven to the poor exile would, however, be the affair of a fortnight; and anxious not to exceed the time he had mentioned to the young Herbert for Edwin's conveyance to school, the Duke suggested that a letter from Mrs. Cecil might be his introduction; adding, while a slight flush passed over his cheeks, "But let it not be as the minister-Duke. Let me first be known to these interesting young beings as their father's friend. Have they ever heard of Walter Fitz-Henry?"

Mrs. Cecil smiled, for she recollected that no nursery tale had ever afforded half the exquisite interest which the relation of "brave little Wat's" desperate courage had done; and she also surmised that the identity of the Duke, and the young preserver of their father's life, was unknown; aware as she was of the mortification which in the first-mentioned character, he had unconsciously inflicted.

The letter was soon written; and with the fervent assurance, that, under the blessing of Providence, better days should come, the Duke took his leave of the delighted and excellent Mrs. Cecil, who felt that already the merciful dispensations of Heaven had been extended towards them, in thus raising up so powerful a friend in their sorrow and distress.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"There was a soft enchantment in her eye,
That charmed all it met; and round it wrought
A sympathetic license of pure thought;
As in some fane of loveliest sanctity—
Such was the look of angel from on high."

It was now a few days beyond the fortnight to which Herbert and Evelyn Cecil had looked as the period of some further communication from the stranger, if not of his appearance with the full cognizance of their father, to put into execution his beneficent intentions respecting Edwin. Every thing in the way of preparation was completed. The little school-boy's wardrobe, by the infinite industry and arrangement of Evelyn, was already made and packed in the trunk, which the poor boy regarded daily with a smile or a tear, as affection for his beloved family whom he was about to leave, or the ambition of being a scholar, predominated in his childish but feeling heart.

Evelyn, who had overtaken herself, now in the reaction of completed labors felt restless and unhappy. She dreaded the hour which was to take her dear little companion from her; and yet with the nervousness of youth, which is sanguine to the last minute, and then desponds at the first delay, she began to fear that the stranger, had forgotten them. Having, by the favorable evidence she had ever given

of him to her brother, in some measure answered for the truth and purity of his intentions, she felt a sort of responsibility—an intense anxiety that he would prove the friend his words and her innate conviction had promised he would be. Still he came not; and during this uncertainty Evelyn could settle to no occupation; and except at those moments of intense feeling, when attending on her suffering mother, or reading to her the holy pages, which was both her own and Herbert's daily task, all animation and activity had fled from her.

She had completed the arrangement of her mother's room, which was always her self-allotted task, and for which her sylph-like step and agile movements peculiarly fitted her, when, having returned into the little parlor for the purpose of hearing her young sisters recite their daily lessons, a deep sense of sorrow and desolation oppressed her, and leaning her face upon her hands she burst into tears. Rachel entered at the moment; and seeing her young lady's despondency, was grieved to the heart, exclaiming most angrily—

"I thought how it would be, Miss Cecil, you have not stirred from the house for days and days. Do, my sweet child, oblige your old nurse, and go and take a walk this brisk autumn morning. These two darling children look pale—you will all be the better for the fresh air. Mr. Herbert will remain with my mistress; and if Master Edwin stays at home, I am sure he's clever enough to receive the strange gentleman, should he come."

It was impossible to disobey arrangements which were so kindly but peremptorily made by one who lived but for her charge's welfare; and kissing her nurse's cheek, Evelyn promised to be more mindful to her health, which an inward presentiment told her was fast failing, and proceeded with her two little sisters to equip themselves for their walk.

It was with anything but pleasure that Evelyn commenced it. She was sure her mother would wish for her in her absence, or that the stranger would come, perhaps, to take Edwin immediately from them; in short, a thousand inquietudes at first assailed her, but by degrees the beautiful bright morning dispersed the clouds from her mind, and every moment her step became more light and elastic, while a pale color stole over the sickly tints of her still beautiful but attenuated and altered countenance.

It was at a later hour than she had ever left her home; and although it was the empty season of London, she was for an instant appalled by the bustle and crowded state of the road, which told her she might chance to meet some former acquaintance. Drawing her veil more closely over her face, she directed her steps as far from the public haunts and houses as was possible; and soon having passed a suburb, they reached a more private road, which the children with mirthful glee declared was quite the country, because a hawthorn hedge with shrivelled and dusty leaves ran along one side of it. Evelyn rejoiced to see their cheeks glow, and their eyes resume their wonted animation; and as they bounded on before her, she blessed the happy unconsciousness of childhood of mental anxiety and trouble. Presently she lost sight of them. They had arrived before the conservatory of a nursery-garden; and tempted by the sight and perfume of some beautiful flowers, they had entered.

Evelyn was hastening to them, fearful that their

intrusion, without any intention of purchasing the objects of their admiration, might annoy the man who was in attendance in the green-house, when her steps were arrested and her gaze riveted upon an object which at that moment suddenly presented itself to her startled sight. It was a groom in the Clairville livery, who was leading two saddle-horses, one of which she immediately recognized, it being a little grey Arabian belonging to Lady de Cressy, upon which she had taken many a happy ride.

Evelyn felt that in another moment she might be in the presence of her cousins. What was she to do? Her father's strict prohibition still rung in her ears; but yet with all her filial obedience, her heart beat high with delight, and yearned to behold those she loved so well. Whilst she stood transfixed to the spot doubtful and fearful how to act, all choice upon the subject was ended, by seeing her cousin Julian rush from the conservatory with wild anxious looks, and followed by Blanche de Cressy, who was holding little Lucy in her arms, whilst Laura clung affectionately by her side. Evelyn stood motionless and pale as marble; but as her dear affectionate cousins approached, the warm tide of love and delight rushed to her heart, and with exquisite joy and emotion she felt herself alternately pressed to the bosoms of the transported Blanche and Julian, while tears, arising from the suddenness of the pleasure, fell abundantly from her eyes.

After the first burst of emotion, although there was so much to say, so much to hear, utterance was no easy effort; and short incoherent sentences were all that passed. At last they entered the conservatory; and there seated between her two cousins, Evelyn for a short moment forgot her griefs in the delight of their presence.

Julian, too, experienced equally with herself the all-absorbing nature of this unexpected encounter; the affairs of the last month, and the embarrassment of the present period, all faded from his thoughts.

There was the cherished Evelyn, the object for whom so many anxious searches had been directed, seated by his side; and chance had brought about that happiness which his best efforts had failed to effect. Still his heart was very full as he looked upon her, and his spirit sank with a vague dread as he beheld the warm glow which surprise and joy had brought to her cheek fade away, leaving it pale and emaciated. Her round, dimpled face was now almost lost from thinness; and those well-remembered, bright, laughing eyes had totally lost their usual expression. Still she was lovely, though it was beauty prematurely blighted.

Her dress too! Evelyn had formerly been often testingly accused of being a perfect *petite maitresse*; but now! and Julian, a little addicted to the vanities of the world, sighed deeply as he scanned the plainness—almost amounting to meanness—of her attire. Her lovely ringlets were no longer to be seen playing about her cheeks and throat of Parian whiteness; but her hair was braided plain over her forehead, and her face nearly concealed by a deep straw bonnet; while a large dark shawl seemed equally desirous of hiding the symmetry of her nymph-like figure. Julian had leisure for these observations while the unconscious object of them was attempting something like coherent answers to the thousand questions Blanche was pouring into her ear. But Evelyn found it difficult to reply, for she had much to conceal. Without revealing the place

of their abode, she told them of a strict seclusion in which they were living by her father's command, adding that doubtless he had reasons for the concealment, as also for the solemn prohibition he had placed upon their seeking a meeting with the Clairville family. She spoke of Edwin's good prospects through the medium of a friend; but forbore to enter into particulars, scarcely knowing where to begin the story, and feeling an indefinite averseness to mention it. With bitter tears she informed them of the poor baby's death; of the serious illness and protracted sufferings of her mother; and then with a powerful effort at calmness, concluded her sad history, saying with a pious unaffected tone of resignation—

"But it is God's will that sorrow should, at present be our portion; we must therefore bow in patience, trusting that by implicitly following the dictates of our duty, his hand will guide us through our difficulties."

Julian looked at his young cousin with feelings not to be described. If at first he thought her beauty diminished, he now retracted the idea, it shone forth with a character so imposing. She appeared to him, in words as well as looks, a being of angelic loveliness. Both Blanche and himself, though knowing the poverty and distress which had assailed her, at this moment looked at her almost as a creature of a superior celestial nature, at once above the cares and weaknesses of this world.

Beseeching them not to attempt to shake her resolution of returning alone to her lowly home, or her denial of again seeking a meeting with them, Evelyn at length rose to depart, alleging that her return was absolutely necessary, and that her lengthened stay might occasion anxiety. All that the importunities of Blanche, and the passionate entreaties of Julian could gain from her, was the consent that letters to her might be sent through Mr. Disney in Berner's Street, until she might gain her father's permission for more satisfactory communication, unless indeed she should ascertain that he was averse even to such slight intercourse as that already proposed. Blanche was contented with this; for with her schemes and sanguine expectations, she trusted that the day was not far distant when, through her means, all this sorrow and distress should be forever banished.

Most tender were her adieus to her beloved Evelyn, and many and affectionate were the kind words sent to Mrs. Cecil and Herbert. Julian had proceeded to the garden to recall the little girls who had been sent there to gather the few autumnal flowers it afforded. Taking advantage of his absence, Blanche said earnestly to her cousin,

"Evelyn, but one more word with you. Measures will be shortly taken to alleviate the pecuniary distresses of my uncle. Will you promise me one thing? If aught comes to your knowledge, or you are any way consulted on the subject, will you tell your father that the few thousands I can now offer, and which may assist him, are as nothing in the bounteous supply of wealth which a too kind Providence has bestowed upon me: and should he still hesitate, tell him—oh! tell him, dear Evelyn,—that one who would be his daughter now supplicates him to avail himself of her yet unappropriated fortune."

Blanche blushed deeply as she made this distinct avowal of sentiments already surmised by Evelyn, but of which she had never spoken. Julian's ap-

approach prevented all reply except a tender embrace, while tears of love and gratitude fell on the bosom, whose nobleness of feeling and generous impulses were not now for the first time betrayed to her.

The cousins parted. Evelyn turned her steps towards her home with a heart lightened and comforted. It was not so with Julian and Blanche, whose spirits were now depressed by the fuller knowledge of sufferings and sorrow which they were still unable to alleviate. The image of their dear and once lovely Evelyn seemed still to be before them as they rode slowly away in an opposite direction. But how changed! her spirits and wild vivacity oppressed; her beauty faded. Still there was the same beautiful mind predominant, whose early piety and angelic disposition they had ever known. "It is that which will sustain her," thought Blanche as she brushed the tears from her cheeks, and prayed to Heaven that so it might be.

Julian offered no interruption to the reverie in which the late scene caused her thoughts to be absorbed, and his silence was attributed by her to the same reason. But a far different subject occupied his attention. A chapel clock struck three as they passed it, and he recollected that it was an hour later than that which he had named to Lady Florence St. John as the time for his visit to her.

His whole soul was filled with perturbation. How could he present himself before her with his feelings distracted as they were? how could he listen to murmurs and complaints which his better reason could not console, and yet which he must compassionate? Still he dared not disappoint her. There was a vehemence and recklessness in her disposition he was well aware, which might lead her to some act of which the *clat* and odium would reflect equally upon them both; and to have his name coupled with that of Lady Florence in the *canon* of clubs and satirical journals, at the moment when the chaste influence of Evelyn Cecil had resumed its full empire on his mind, was a thought which he could scarcely bear.

His resolve was at length taken. He *must* go to Belgrave Square. Keeping a little in advance of Blanche, for which the impetuosity of his steed afforded a good pretext, he was thus enabled to address her without the embarrassment which he felt his countenance must betray, being visible. A forgotten appointment was the plea urged for leaving her. The agitated tone of his voice rather startled Blanche; but attributing it to the scene and conversation which had just occurred, she forbore to remark upon it; and good humoredly accepting his excuses, she bade him not be equally unmindful of the dinner hour in Grosvenor Square that day, but if it were possible, to come an hour earlier, that they might talk over together the occurrences of the morning. Julian promised acquiescence, and giving reins to his impatient horse, it bore him in an instant from her sight, leaving her to pursue uninterruptedly the happy train of thought which the meeting with Evelyn seemed completely to justify.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"This is the prettiest low-born lass. —"

Nothing she does, or seems,

But smacks of something greater than herself,

Too noble for this place."

WHEN Evelyn was making her parting adieu to Blanche, she little imagined that the scene was wit-

nessed by any eyes but those most interested in her feelings. Whilst she pressed her dear cousin tenderly in her arms, as they stood at the entrance to the conservatory, unmindful of all passing objects, they were looked upon with much curiosity by a stranger, who at the moment was riding slowly by. He was young and handsome, and his splendid horse, his exquisite dress, and whole bearing, displayed the marks of extreme *bon ton*; still Evelyn, though her head was turned towards him, observed him not. He was not equally unmindful; for her beautiful countenance now flushed by excitement, and, although sorrowful, full of animation, almost electrified him with its radiant and touching loveliness. He for an instant checked his horse, and gazed upon her with a fascinated eye, until he felt himself obliged to proceed, lest his bold scrutiny should be observed. He, however, moved slowly away, turning every moment round to observe the motions of the young ladies, who he guessed were about to part, judging from the riding dress of one and the saddle-horses standing near. The next time he looked round the riding party were gone; and he beheld the beautiful Evelyn advancing with languid steps towards him, accompanied only by the two children, who with large bouquets in their hands, tripped joyfully by her side.

The young man stopped, dismounted, pretended to busy himself in adjusting the girths of his saddle, altered the bridle, in short did everything to retard his movements, until Evelyn reached the part of the road where he stood. His motive was to catch another glimpse of her lovely features, and then, if possible, form some conjecture as to who or what she might be. To judge from her attire, and the circumstance of her being alone and unprotected in the public road, she could not be above the lower orders of society; but still her intimacy with one who legitimately, or illegitimately, seemed to take a much higher station, gave a mystery and piquancy to the object of his admiration, that her beauty scarcely needed in his eyes. A thousand surmises presented themselves to his fertile imagination; and he was just balancing between the probabilities of her being an opera dancer *en retraite*, or the assistant at some suburban academy, when she arrived close to where he stood. Proudly and firmly now she walked, for she perceived the inquisitive gaze of the young man fixed upon her with an expression which offended and alarmed her.

Suddenly the spirited horse, perceiving doubtless how little attentive its master was to its movements, threw up its head, and made a violent swerve, in an effort to be free. By this he approached so near the footpath, that the two little girls screamed and clung in terror to their sister. The gentleman immediately secured his horse, and then apologized to Evelyn in the most courteous terms for the arm of which he had been the cause to herself and young companions. Evelyn was then obliged to turn her head for a moment towards him; but her deep bonnet and thick veil, now most carefully drawn, were tantalizing barriers to his impatient eyes; and she merely replied to his words by bowing in the coldest manner. Seeing that he was inclined to detain them by speaking to the still affrighted children, she took them both by the hand, and making a second haughty inclination of the head, she walked hastily and resolutely on.

"By Jove!" exclaimed the stranger, as he slowly remounted his horse, provoked at the rebuff; yet even more excited by his failure, and the dignity

and grace of the object of his admiration. "Here's a riddle, and a face that will haunt me! An opera dancer, good sooth! Pasta could not have done dignity better."

Evelyn walked rapidly on with a feeling of terror at her heart. She had never before felt so keenly the want of protection; for there was something in the libertine expression of the young *roué's* countenance, as well as in his manner, which alarmed her, she scarcely knew why; and with almost an instinctive feeling, she was sure that he was following her. However she was soon relieved by seeing him gallop past them; and quickly pursuing her way, she had nearly reached her home, when she again encountered her tormentor. Another turn brought her into the street where their house was situated. She still heard the noise of the horse's feet behind her, and was hesitating whether she could at once seek the shelter of her home, or, by avoiding it, for the moment prevent the discovery of her place of abode, when all uncertainty was put to an end by the sudden appearance of Herbert, who seemed watching for her return. With a countenance pale as death, and in evident and great agitation, he exclaimed, "Evelyn, where have you been? What torture your long absence has given me; but thank heaven your are safe!"

Evelyn took his arm without speaking, for she felt too exhausted. Regarding her with anxiety, he said, "My sweet Eve, you seem harassed and tired; and I fear my news will not revive you. Our mother—our poor mother—is very, very ill, and has been so ever since you were out; but both the doctor and the nurse are with her."

Evelyn clasped her hands in silent agony; she trembled so violently that Herbert was obliged almost to carry her into the house. Giving the two little girls into the charge of a servant-girl, he supported the nearly fainting Evelyn into the little parlor, and perceiving how completely powerless she was, he made her swallow some wine. In a few moments she appeared somewhat revived; but faint murmurs which proceeded from the sick room, and which from the smallness of the house were distinctly audible, appeared to strike upon her heart as if a dagger had pierced it. She started from her seat, and then fell on her knees before her brother, burying her face in her hands. For a moment she was silent; but in the next her voice was lifted up in prayer; and with her eyes raised, her hands clasped, her whole attitude breathed the very spirit of devotion. Her pious aspiration for her suffering mother ended, she again became exhausted, and her head sunk upon her brother's knee. Her eyes were tearless; but those of Herbert were shedding many upon the beauteous head which he supported.

Just then a noise was heard above—a quick step crossing the room—then the opening of a door and footsteps descending rapidly the stairs. The brother and sister both started up; but there was but a very brief space of agonizing suspense to be endured; for Rachael hastily entered, and with an April face of smiles and tears, exclaimed, "Thank God, my children! Your mother is safe! Come, dear Miss Evelyn, your services are now wanted. You must take charge for the present of the baby."

A rush of tears relieved poor Evelyn's bursting heart; and in an instant she flew after Rachael to the door of her mother's room. There the new-born infant was placed in her arms, and tenderly holding

it to her bosom, she took it into the adjoining apartment, where the anxious Rachael was hastily lighting a fire, previously to dressing the fragile creature who had just learnt to breathe in this world of care.

Seating herself by the fire, it was with intense emotion, mingled with curiosity and pleasure, that Evelyn peeped beneath the wrapper to gain one look of the little brother who was hid amid its folds. Her feminine heart at once felt a glow of tender interest for the delicate babe, proving her participation in that attribute of her sex; the ^{late} during, patient, never-failing love of a woman towards an infant.

Mrs. Cecil that night was better than her anxious family had dared to hope. Still, in order to allay the agitation which the birth of the babe under so many afflicting circumstances occasioned, the medical man was obliged to have recourse to opium; and the effect which this might produce on the mind of the patient was still to be proved.

The next day, however, dawned auspiciously; and Herbert was enabled to announce the event to his father with the attendant reassuring circumstances, of the well-doing both of the mother and of her infant boy.

CHAPTER XXV.

"Tranio, I burn, I pine, I perish, Tranio,
If I achieve not this young modest girl;
Counsel me Tranio, for I know thou canst;
Assist me, Tranio."

"WHAT, in the name of all that is preposterous, is the matter with you to-night, Fitz?" exclaimed an exquisite of the very first quality, to his distinguished-looking companion, who, seated with him at a small table covered with all the appliances of a *recherche* supper, in the splendid saloon of Crockford's, remained abstemious as an anchorite; and with his arms folded, and an abstracted air, seemed the very genius of gastronomic contemplation.

"Fitz-Henry!" again reiterated his friend, on finding his first question was unheard; "I say, Fitz-Henry, what the devil is the matter with you to-night? I have been watching you this last half-hour, during each interregnum that my own voracious appetite has allowed; and I could stake my best hopes at Doncaster that you have not taken your eyes once off that lobster salad. I have heard of the lady in the lobster, and I'd be sworn you had found her, for I never saw you stare so long at anything excepting a woman."

"Villars," exclaimed the pensive but now awakened Fitz-Henry, "Villars, I have been confoundedly hit to-day."

"Hit! Why you don't mean to say that Crocky got up any hazard this evening?" inquired the Honorable Frederic Villars, bathing the delicate tips of his fingers in the water glass, and then as scrupulously drying each with his damask napkin as if he was completing a toilette instead of a supper.

"Bshaw!" replied his lordship in a petulant tone as though he resented the misconstruction of his words, "can't a man be hit at anything but play? I tell you I've been hit by a woman, and devilishly hard too!"

"Gramercy on his heart!" said Mr. Villars with a mock compassion in his tone. "But pray let us hear how this thousand and one hit was struck."

Lord Fitz-Henry now smiled, and added in an earnest manner—

"If you choose to listen I will gladly give you the history of my adventures."

"Had I three-and-thirty ears I'd gladly hear thee; but recollect, Fitz-Henry, I will have no hand in this or any of your love affairs," said Mr. Villars, composing himself in his chair in the attitude of a listener.

"What a bore you have become since your Methodist cousin has had a fortune left her! Fred," said Lord Fitz-Henry, with a shrug of disgust. "But now for my history. This eventful morning I rode down to Brentford to see some young horses which I have there, and on my return saw something much better worth the seeing, a most exquisitely lovely girl, but so encompassed with inconsistencies, I could not say whether she was a duchess or a broken-down *marchande de modes*. And the devil's part of the business is, she had so much artificial or real dignity that she effectually repulsed me, even me, who, you know, never am easily rebuffed."

"Certainly not, *mon cher*; but proceed," was the short interruption offered by Mr. Villars, whose stumberous appearance rather incensed the chronicler of his own doughty adventures. His lordship, however, did proceed; and briefly relating all the particulars told in the preceding chapter,—the apparent difference in the rank of the parting friends,—the excessive coldness and high-bearing of the beautiful girl whose footsteps he followed; and her meeting with the handsome youth, who was too unlike her to be her brother, yet who, with his arm around her waist, bore her to a mean-looking house with fraternal tenderness at least, if not of the most devoted lover. Lord Fitz-Henry concluded by asking his friend's advice.

"Why, Fitz," exclaimed the now awakened Villars, "you surely do not mean to proceed in your impertinence towards this poor girl?"

"Most assuredly I mean to proceed with my tender homage to her beauty, which is the best translation of my intentions, Villars," Lord Fitz-Henry replied; "neither do I intend to rest until I discover who she is, and then *nous verrons*!"

The conversation was here interrupted, and the two young men separated; Mr. Villars with the regret of a friend, though a fashionable one, at the innate and never-ceasing profligacy of the young lord; Lord Fitz-Henry wondering what Jennie Meranville would say if she discovered the nature of his intentions for the morrow's amusement.

On the following morning, however, the usually *exigeante* Jennie offered no opposition to his plans. She had arranged a very select party to Norwood, and considerately told "*ce cher Fiche-Henri*," he need not trouble himself about her, as the britscha would just hold herself and dear Aspasia Pollian, and the two cavaliers who were to accompany them.

Le cher Fiche rather frowned as he heard the arrangement, but whistling off his dissatisfaction to the tune of "*il segreto per esser felice*," went his way; and about one o'clock in the afternoon, the noble youth was seen parading one of the small streets leading out of Kensington.

His appearance certainly very little accorded with the humble character of the place which he had chosen for his promenade, being strikingly distinguished by his dress, deportment, and great personal beauty. He was gazed upon with surprise by all who passed, while each individual turned round again to stare at the fine gentleman. This, however,

he little heeded. His eyes were fixed upon one particular spot, and that was the house inhabited by Evelyn Cecil.

With the usual recklessness of consequences, where a woman was concerned, Lord Fitz-Henry was now bent on seeing and knowing more of our heroine. No sense of propriety interfered to withhold him, or the fear of giving pain and alarm to a virtuous girl. *Coute qui coute*, he must again behold her, and he trusted to his own perfections and adroitness to smooth all other difficulties.

Although very young, Lord Fitz-Henry had already spent a life of pleasure and indulgence, and at the age of twenty-four was almost satiated with unrestrained gratification. The sole and darling child of a young and dissipated mother, deprived of a father's wholesome restrictions from the nature of his profession and long military career, he had been his own master from his earliest boyhood;—the use he had made of the mastery was to make himself the slave of every dangerous and debasing passion. Until his mother's death, the tenor of his pursuits and occupations had been well concealed by her from the Duke, his father: in this deceit she had been assisted by his tutor, who had found very soon that his greatest merit in the mother's eyes consisted in leaving the young man to perfect freedom, so that until that moment, the Duke had been the only one in a certain set, ignorant of the profligacy of his son. It was discovered too late. Even Fitz-Henry pleaded the utter impossibility of changing old habits; and the Duke was forced to consign him to his fate, trusting that time might effect the reform which he found his best endeavors fail to achieve. Handsome, agreeable, rich, and powerful, the whole world appeared to be at his feet, so rarely had his desires ever been opposed. Inheriting much wealth from his mother, whose fortune had been the acting influence on the relations of the young Walter Fitz-Henry, when prevailing on him to make so early a marriage, he was perfectly independent of his father, and found that money was a powerful agent to his pleasures and vices.

It is sad to think of the fearful ordeal which man in the season of youth is obliged to pass. Pleasure seems to put forth its blossoms on every side; passion urges him to pluck them while yet he may; and rushing forward with inconsiderate ardor, the enjoyments are secured, while too often every better principle is lost.

Lord Fitz-Henry felt, for the first time, some misgivings as to the ultimate success which might crown his present pursuit. There was something even in the brief glimpse which he had caught of his thickly veiled divinity, that had stamped her as a being very different from the usual inhabitants of a suburb, who wear straw bonnets and dark shawls. Perhaps this feeling heightened the excitement of his fancy, and without excitement he could not exist. It had become as necessary to him as opium to the Turk, or tobacco to the American; and have it he must in some form or other.

After lounging about for some time, and yet seeing nothing but the same dingy-looking house, which was rendered still more dismal in appearance from the upper windows being closely curtained, Fitz-Henry went to the extremity of peeping over the green canvass blinds into the parlor. His inspection offered very little to interest him; merely enabling him to see three young children sitting at the table

in the centre of the apartment busily conning their books. All this was very tiresome, and so potentially *ennuyeux*, that he was half resolved to set off instantly for Norwood, and see what Jennie and her friend the fair Aspasie were about. But just as he was wearied to the utmost at the dull aspect of affairs, it came into his head to go into a shop exactly opposite to the house. He thought that there at least he might gain some information with regard to its inhabitants.

It was a kind of general grocer's; one who sells all sorts of commodities, and whose heterogeneous stock in trade consists usually in cheeses, bacon, eggs, letter-paper, and sealing-wax, tallow candles and mops, patens and sugar-candy. In he went, hardly knowing what he was going to say or do, and found himself in the midst of various customers, one buying an ounce of tea, a second two rush-lights, and so forth. The smell which issued from this comprehensive magazine was not very agreeable to the fastidious nerves of the exquisite Fitz-Henry; however, he bore it with manly fortitude, and stood at the door with his arms folded, and his eyes fixed upon the opposite house, waiting until he could command the attention of the mistress of the shop.

One by one the customers departed.—Some elbowing our delicate lording, as he stood taking up the entrance of the door-way; others courtesying respectfully, and eyeing him with looks of scrutiny and surprise.

At length they were all gone, and the shop-keeper, a fat, good-tempered looking woman, with the blandest tone of voice to which a chandler's shop ever resounded, ventured to ask, "Can I serve you now, sir?"

"Oh! yes, certainly, by all means," said Fitz-Henry, starting, and remembering, for the first time, that it was doubtless expected he should make some purchase. "If you please, ma'am," and his eye glanced inquiringly round the shop, "if you please, I want some Spanish liquorice and a mop."

"How much, sir?" said the good woman, enchanted by his courteous bearing. And on his begging for half-a-crown's worth in his simplicity, he saw a piece at least half a yard long wrapped up in brown paper for his use.

"Anything more, sir?" was then asked.

"Why yes, ma'am," replied Fitz-Henry, beginning to be amused at his present predicament, and determined upon doing the thing handsomely, "Suppose you put me up half-a-dozen of those mops."

"Half-a-dozen, sir!" she said, looking incredulous.

"Yes, why not? And one of those magnificent-looking cheeses," Fitz-Henry said, looking learnedly at the shelf on which they stood.

Refusing with unfeigned horror to taste a bit of the "prime Cheshire," which was handed over the counter to him in a dirty-looking iron implement, he said, taking some sovereigns from his purse, "And now, ma'am, if you please I will pay you, and will send for these things by-and-by," an expression very often used by his lordship for "never."

He paid the money, however, to the delighted shopkeeper, who never in her life had served so good-looking and affable a customer; and he began in an opportune moment the interrogatories he wished to make.

"And now, my good lady, that I have transacted

my little business, I just want to ask you a question or two. Can you tell me who lives in the house opposite? The one with the upper windows closed."

"Yes, sir, I can certainly tell you all I knows on the subject, and that's a very leetle."

"But their names," impatiently repeated Lord Fitz-Henry.

"Why, sir," she replied, looking mysterious, "they goes by the name of Norton. But my son, who is a bit of a scholar, says he is certain that they are incog—incogs—no, incognaturs, that's what he says they are. And I have reasons for being sure that Norton is not their real and true name."

"Do tell me all about it, my dear Madam," said Fitz-Henry anxiously. "By the way, you may put me up two of those fine-looking hams," he added, pointing to some huge dried legs of pork which grazed the ceiling. He then paid some more money, and said—

"Now tell me your reasons for thinking their name is not Norton."

"I must tell you, sir, that Mrs. Jackson, who takes in washing, buys all her things at my shop, and sometimes I have a leetle chat with her when I am serving her. Says I, 'Mrs. Jackson, the new folks at No. 5, can't give you much trouble in getting up their clothes. I never saw much plainer dressing.' 'I beg your pardon, Mrs. Brown,' says she, 'I never set eyes on more beautiful linen.' 'Bless us,' says I, 'how odd!' Says she, 'If you will just step over to my house on Saturday, afore I sends home the clothes, I'll just show you some of it. Such shimmies! all trimmed with Wollonseens, and the finest Irish. Then the pocket handkerchers! all cambric, and some with needlework, so pretty and ladylike; and indeed everything to match. But what strikes me odd,' says she to me, 'is that all the harticles is marked with C, and not one with N.' Now, sir," continued Mrs. Brown, "I always goes a great deal by the under clothes, and that is a proof positer to me that they are something higher than they seems. You often see your flourishing would-be grandees, with a gown and bonnet on fit for a queen; and then if you could only catch a look at the shimmy, you would be surprised."

Lord Fitz-Henry coughed away a laugh, not to offend the narrator; and to end the dissertation asked if she had ever seen any of the family.

"See them! why bless you, Miss Norton, as they calls her, comes here very often to pay the bill, sweet, pretty creature! Would you believe it, sir?" continued Mrs. Brown; "my son Jeemes has quite lost his heart to her. 'Jeemes,' says I, 'when he is going on about her, 'what a fool you are.' 'Mother,' says he, 'a cat may look at the king!' And then he runs on about her being like an angel. And the other day when she took off her glove to take some money out of her purse, he really looked as if he could have eaten her little lilly-white hand."

"The audacious monster!" muttered Fitz-Henry between his teeth. And then inquired in a tone of affected carelessness, if there was no gentleman belonging to the family.

"Lord bless you! yes sir; there's the brother a fine-looking young gentleman, but very proud like, not condescending like Miss Norton—but they are both good young people, to think of all they have gone through with that sick mother! The poor soul was brought to bed last night, and then the trouble they had with the dear baly that died. They

are for all the world, young as they are, like father and mother to the little children."

"Have they a father?" inquired Fitz-Henry.

"That's what I can't exactly make out," replied the verbose grocer. "I have tried to get something out of the nurse, but I might as well look for blood in a stone. Howsomdever, I went over this morning to ask if I could be of use, now the poor lady is put to bed, and I see Miss Norton herself."

"How does she look without her bonnet?" was the next question put.

"I warrant you she looks like an angel, nothing else in life. Though I must say, sir, that her hair is done funnily; not a curl, or a bow, or a plait, as I have seen on the beautiful ladies' heads in the hair-dressers' shops. Still she looked sweetly pretty; though it was done so mean like."

"You are really a charming woman, Mrs. Brown," said Fitz-Henry, fancying that he detected beauties through Mrs. Brown's graphic description.

"Lor! sir, you are very good," she said, courtesying and smirking, "and if you say so of me, who have had a family of nine, and brought up seven, what would you say of Miss Norton? You should have heard her thanking me, and saying she would take my kind offer, if so be that they wanted hands. It was so prettily said, and so like a real lady. I warrant me there is more there than meets the eye."

It appeared as if Mrs. Brown's words were prophetic: for at this moment Lord Fitz-Henry, whose eyes were constantly fixed upon Evelyn's house, turned very red and then quite pale; while a low-murmured oath, which being in Spanish did not scandalize Mrs. Brown, betrayed considerable inward emotion.

An apparition had met his eyes which had a most stunning effect upon his senses. It was nothing less than the form of his own father, walking quietly up to the very door that he had so watched! He rang gently, and in an instant the door was opened by the fair creature for whose sake the gallant Fitz-Henry was now suffocating in the grocer's shop!

She at first started in surprise; but the next moment, as if in a transport of joy and pleasure, she placed both her hands in the extended one of the Duke of Strathaven.

Fitz-Henry saw him enter, and the door was shut. It was then that the disappointed innamorato, stunned, bewildered, and annoyed beyond the power of description, rushed out of the shop; and hastily seeking his horse, which he had left at a neighboring livery-stable, he mounted it, and galloped furiously away.

CHAPTER XXVI.

"Be of good cheer!"

"You are fallen into a princely hand, fear nothing: Make your full reference freely to my lord, Who is so full of grace, that it flows over On all that need."

STRANGE events often follow each other in quick succession. Months may elapse, and we live on in one undisturbed routine of sameness; when suddenly a tide of occurrences, flow in, powerfully exciting and agitating the mind, with the unwonted interruption they offer to the monotony which before prevailed.

It was thus with Evelyn Cecil. Since the removal of her family to Kensington, except at the period of the poor baby's death, time had moved on

with the same slow step, unmarked by change or pleasure. How different had been the tenor of the last two days! how momentous in her sad existence! All had been excitement.

To have seen her dear cousins—the fondly-loved Blanche, and the kind affectionate Julian—was such an accession of happiness to her care-worn feelings, that, as she laid her head on her pillow that night, she almost dreaded sleep which would rob her senses of the joyful recollection. And then what a deep and holy cause had she for further rejoicing, in the safe confinement and present well doing of her mother. Almost every word that passed her lips that happy evening was a prayer of thanksgiving; and the next morning she quite regretted that her new office of nurse to the infant, would prevent her joining in the happy task of writing with her brother to tell all this to her beloved father.

Herbert had gone to Mr. Disney, for the purpose of having the letter forwarded, with any papers he might have to send; and Evelyn was anxiously awaiting his return, believing it likely that he might as usual, bring back some news of their father from Berner's Street.

The new-born infant was sleeping calmly on her lap, when she fancied that she heard her brother's step on the silent pavement at the door; and the bell ringing the next minute seemed to corroborate the idea. She therefore placed the infant gently on the bed, and whispering to the nurse that she must leave it for some minutes, she glided quickly down stairs, and proceeded herself to the door for the purpose of admitting Herbert.

The many events of the last day had for the time driven all thoughts of their stranger-friend from her mind; and she had forgotten the anxiety with which she had awaited some further communication from him.

Therefore it was with an intense feeling of surprise, on opening the door, that she perceived his noble and dignified form, instead of the youthful Herbert. But the sight of him brought an exquisite and bewildering sensation of joy to her heart; and obeying its impulses, rather than what the customs and *biensance* of society might have dictated, she placed both her hands within his, while an exclamation of pure and unmixed delight betrayed the sincerity of her rejoicing.

The stranger's earnest though benevolent gaze seemed for a moment to question the reality of the naive evidence of her joy, but still retaining one of her hands, he followed her into the passage. The next minute she opened the door of the little parlour; and Edwin throwing down the grammar he was so sedulously studying, sprang to meet his benefactor, with the same unequivocal expression of delight as marked the reception which Evelyn had given.

It was indeed a moment of exquisite pleasure to all. The Duke—for as such our readers must have recognized him—felt a long-forgotten happiness in this exhibition of genuine feeling, to check which no knowledge of his rank and important position in society had interfered; while Evelyn and Edwin, once more in the presence of one who had alone shown compassion for their destitution, and with that compassion the power of befriending them, felt a glad exultation of heart, at the proof his visit gave of the sincerity of his intentions.

"I must now give you my credentials," the Duke at length said with a smile, as releasing his hands

from Edwin's caresses, he presented a letter to Evelyn. "It is not from your father," he added, "the time not allowing me to hear from him since I have a certain place of his abode: but this is from one who knows me equally well with himself, and is as kindly disposed; and I sincerely trust that the words of your father's mother will inspire the same confidence in my wishes of serving you, as those of Captain Cecil himself."

Evelyn took the letter, which her quick intelligence enabled her, to read in a few seconds; and turning to the Duke she said, with unaffected cordiality, "Then we may really love you as my father's friend, in addition to the claim your kindness and compassion have given you on our best feelings. Edwin," she said, turning to the little fellow, whose blue eyes were distended with curiosity, "do you remember hearing of papa's dear comrade, Walter Fitz-Henry, who saved him from drowning?"

"What, brave little Wat?" Edwin exclaimed in a transport of pleasure; then turning with the sweetest action of childish affection, and almost throwing himself into the arms of the Duke, "are you indeed, that dear, dear Walter, who, when the gun burst in his hand, held it, all bleeding in his bosom, for a quarter of an hour, that papa might not be blamed for having lent it to him! Oh! how we have loved you! And Evelyn, when she was a little girl, always cried when they told the story of that noble Walter, carrying the poor gipsy's child six miles, after he had fought the wicked man, who kicked it and its mother when they were only gathering his water-cresses. Are you, indeed, really Walter, sir, or only his relation?"

The Duke could not reply. Evelyn thought she saw a tear glistening in his eye; and her own lip trembled, as, taking upon herself to reply for the Duke, she said, "Yes, indeed, Edwin, this is the same dear friend. But you know he went into the army. Are we to address you as Colonel, or General Fitz-Henry?" she added, turning to the Duke in inquiry; some obscure recollection making her aware that her father's "Walter" had attained high rank in the army.

The Duke bowed as he quietly said, "I was general in the army, but I have now done with military affairs;" and he felt inwardly rejoiced that, as Mrs. Cecil had imagined, his rank would not be immediately detected. At this moment, Herbert Cecil entered the apartment. At first he bowed coldly, with a look of anxious inquiry directed towards the Duke; and then before Evelyn could finish the half-uttered sentence, by which she sought to introduce the Duke as the friend who had offered such protection to Edwin, Herbert started, exclaiming in tones of unfeigned surprise, "The Duke of Strathhaven! and in our humble habitation?"

A scene of some embarrassment ensued. The Duke was sorry that the exalted rank which he had hitherto found in a measure exclude him from the affections and sympathies of the good and excellent, though untitled portion of mankind, was now betrayed, fearing the result with the ingenious young beings before him. And yet he felt relieved,—that the incognito, which, in a moment of romantic feeling he had wished to have observed, was ended; as he felt that it was every way unworthy his intentions with regard to the Cecils, as also to the open and manly character of their father.

Evelyn also became aware of the real name and

consequence of their benefactor, with some mingled feelings. It was a happiness to find that one who had shown so zealous a wish of serving them, was of that influence in the world that his least desire must be effective; still the knowledge of his identity seemed to throw back to her bosom those sensations of gratitude and pleasure his actions had called forth. It was not his actual rank which had this effect—from the society which the aspiring nature of Captain Cecil had called around him, titles had become familiar things to his children—but it was the cold, haughty minister, the man whose talents and exclusive feelings had placed him, as it were, alone in the world, who was now before her. She had heard of, and admired him as an illustrious character connected with the history of her country: but this was all; and she felt that the grateful affection his gratuitous benevolence had called forth, could not now be indulged in; and that from henceforth they could only regard themselves as among the many who had shared his charity and extensive munificence. The idea brought with it a chilling sense of mortification; and though she listened with a breathless interest to the details the Duke was giving to Herbert, which comprehended a brief relation of his early friendship with Captain Cecil, the estrangement his unintentional indifference had produced, and his late interview with their grandmother; above all, the active and anxious measures which Blanche de Cressy was taking for the amelioration of their sad position—still Evelyn felt dissatisfied; and the expressions of deep, and even affectionate gratitude, which this history would have drawn from her lips, were now checked; and she even longed to be alone, that the contending emotions of her mind might be allowed some vent in the tears which she felt every minute rising to her eyes.

At the conclusion of the Duke's recital, Herbert had but one sentiment, far preponderating over every other. It was the devout thankfulness of a pious heart to Almighty God who had thus raised up succor and solace to their afflictions.

His words of acknowledgment to the Duke even partook of his holy feelings; and to one less observing, or less able to appreciate the high-souled and elevated nature of the noble Herbert, his expressions might have appeared cold. But the Duke also knew in whose hands were all the issues of life; and while seeking to remove the difficulties of those so excellent, felt himself but the instrument in the hands of an all-wise and merciful Providence.

On turning to Evelyn to make his adieu, the Duke for the first time became aware of the great alteration which had taken place in her appearance since he had first beheld her glowing with health and loveliness, the morning that she had dropped her watch. Her attenuated countenance and hollow eyes now spoke of fatigue and anxiety; and though there was a bright and rosy color on either cheek, it was more the burning flush of weakness and excitement, than the beautiful hue which had once adorned her lovely face. He paused for a minute, while a look of deep commiseration and anxiety passed over his features; and then with a kindness that spoke more even than the benevolent expression of his looks, said, "Miss Cecil, you appear fatigued. I fear the cares of your little *menage* are indeed too much for you. I do not like to ask you to leave your suffering mother, for I know such a request would be instantly denied to me; but surely it would

as a means of lightening your anxieties, and keeping your invalid in greater quiet, if you would allow your little sisters and my friend Edwin to stay with me some short time. I have much interest in your kind acquiescence to this petition, for my excellent and early friend Mrs. Cecil half promised me a visit in town, but annexed the condition that she would only come if she could be of use. I have no plea to urge her to leave Riversdale, but if you will tell me that I may have my little visitors to meet her, she will, I am certain, at once consent to join us in town. We shall then only have to arrange the return of your gallant father, for you all again to be united. Come, Mr. Cecil, you must promise me this pleasure," the Duke added, seeing Evelyn hesitated, ere she could find utterance.

"Most gladly—most gratefully," was all that even the usually composed Herbert could say. But their kind friend was not the less convinced of the happiness which his actions conveyed and were meant to convey. Promising that in a few days he would return to tell them the result of his petition to Mrs. Cecil, and to claim the visit of her grandchildren, the Duke then withdrew, leaving those he had so actively befriended overcome at once with joy and bewildering surprise; whilst their young and gladdened hearts sent forth grateful aspirations that they might be worthy the friendship of so great and good a man.

CHAPTER XXVII.

"The shade of youthful hope is there,
That lingered long, and latest died;
Ambition all dissolved to air,
With phantom honors by his side,
What empty shadows glimmer nigh?
They once were friendship, truth, and love,
Oh! die to thought—to memory die,
Since lifeless to my heart ye prove."

We must now for a brief space turn our attention to the father of the youthful beings whose happiness formed the subject of the foregoing chapter.

Our last mention of Captain Cecil left him endeavoring to humble his proud spirit, and to resign himself to the conviction that the evils he lamented, and which began forcibly to impress themselves upon his mind, had been, in fact, brought upon him by himself. He recalled with a feeling of sorrow and shame, how completely he had hitherto sacrificed every consideration to the shrine of Mammon. His ambition had taken no higher flight than this world; and oh! how fallacious had proved his contracted views and wishes. To what had his ambition tended? Blank disappointment. Where were all the friends who had fluttered around him in the sunshine of his prosperity? None now appeared to soothe and comfort him; none, save those who owed him nothing, and who yet appeared to him as messengers of solace sent from Heaven to this his hour of affliction. These were the kind and holy priest, and the generous and benignant man, who had proposed to be so great a benefactor to his poor boy. Now bowed down as was his spirit by severe distress, feeling every day more bitterly the separation from his children and his beloved wife, whose situation rendered his absence doubly painful, he felt the necessity of looking round for some city of refuge in which he might take shelter; and finding all on earth tottering and unstable, he turned in the helplessness of his misery to Him who is alone unchanging and eternal. He cast an anxious and

timid glance upon past months and years; and retracing his life, he listened to the reproachful voice of conscience, remembering the indifference with which he had received, and the ingratitude with which he had wasted the rich gifts that had been bestowed upon him. But it was now that he began to feel peace, though it was indeed alloyed with much sadness; and the effect of this resignation was not only a calm which grief itself could not take away, with a constant readiness to submit to every dispensation of Providence, but also an active and vigorous resolution which willingly undertook the most painful exertions, and performed the tasks assigned, whatever struggle they might cost him.

"There I saw
One who did set the world at calm defiance,
And press, right onward with a bold reliance;
And he did seem to avenge
The very shadows pressing on his breast,
And, with a strong heart, held himself at rest."

Captain Cecil's literary occupations were of much benefit to him, being at the same time wholesome employment for his mind, and great assistance in a pecuniary point of view. The society of Monsieur Liot was also most soothing, but his kind friend, however, had been obliged to go to Paris, and his absence threw some gloom on the spirits of Captain Cecil. The kind Frenchman had been everything to one so new to adversity. He had watched him, and had administered to his wants with the tenderness of a woman; and, which was still more soothing to him, he seemed ever willing to listen to that endless subject of conversation, the wife and children of his poor friend.

At this time, the heart of Captain Cecil beat with unusual impatience, for the time was drawing near when he might expect to hear of his suffering wife's confinement, an event to which he looked forward with shrinking dread.

It was a stormy, gloomy day. The rain had fallen in torrents all the morning, and the heavy atmosphere pressed with tenfold weight upon the faded spirit of the poor exile. He had passed the morning in working without intermission at his desk, and was now weary and sick at heart. The sun, however, seemed struggling with the clouds, and as he knew by experience that his cares always became lighter under the influence of fresh air and exercise, he determined to walk out, first directing his steps to the post-office.

There a letter awaited him! It was from Herbert announcing his mother's safety.

It was a sight which might have caused the tear of sympathy to start in many an eye to have seen the adoring husband whilst he read this letter. First a bright glow, and a joyful start of surprise; but in another moment a deadly paleness succeeded; and soon large drops chased each other rapidly down his cheeks. "My poor, poor Mary!" he exclaimed at length; "and have you suffered all this alone—without my tenderness to support and comfort you in your hour of trouble! And my poor babe—must I not look upon thy little face, and welcome thee, even to this world of woe?"

With disordered steps, he walked rapidly on, plan upon plan succeeding each other in his perturbed mind. He thought with dread on the probable results of Mrs. Cecil's confinement, and the dangerous attacks which she had so often experienced at those times. He thought, too, of those periods when her very life was threatened by

the frightful malady which obscured her reason to a fearful extent; and how for many long weeks, he alone, merely assisted by a nurse and the visits of the doctor, had watched over her, not allowing her to see another person, or permitting a sound to meet her ear. And now she was alone, except with her dear though inexperienced children.

These ideas rushed to his mind with overwhelming force, as he by chance directed his steps to the quay. There he saw a packet getting ready to sail for Southampton.

"When do you start?" inquired Captain Cecil, eagerly, of a sailor.

"In an hour," was the answer.

"Then I will go with you."

The impulse was not to be resisted. The idea of his embarrassments—of his creditors—even of disgrace and imprisonment, vanished from his mind; but well weighed with other things as a straw in the balance. He saw only his wife stretched upon the bed of suffering, perhaps of death; and to be with her—to see her once more, to press even her lifeless form to his devoted heart, would compensate for every thing else. Go he must. Nature and every feeling of affection urged him to depart; therefore hastening back to his habitation, he made a few hurried preparations, procured his passport, and sailed for England.

The passage was boisterous—almost dangerous; but Captain Cecil heeded not the storm; his mind was fixed with intensity upon one object alone. It was his wife who filled his every thought. Sometimes he saw her in his vivid imagination decked for her nuptials. "In the pride of youth and beauty, with a garland on her brow." Then he beheld her in her matronly character; but still how fair and lovely; and oh! how happy when fancy portrayed her at Riversdale, surrounded by her good and beautiful children, turning her soft eyes upon them with maternal love.

"Thou word that sums all bliss,
Gives and receives all bliss,—fullest when most
Thou givest! spring-head of all felicity,
Deepest when most is drawn! emblem of God!
O'erflowing most when greatest numbers drink."

Then again he saw her as she might be now; and the ice bolt of despair shot through his heart. He fancied her a pale, cold corpse. The idea was too horrible to be borne; it drew from him a piercing cry as he leaned in solitary wretchedness over the side of the vessel, apart from every one else.

The packet at length reached Southampton. Captain Cecil made his way instantly to the Custom-house, and owing to his hastily packed portmanteau, was not long detained. Without waiting to take any refreshment, he quickly mounted a coach which was about to start for London, and in a few minutes was advancing rapidly towards his heart's best treasure.

It poured a heavy rain, during the whole of the comfortless journey; and most of the passengers complained bitterly of the cold and wind. But Captain Cecil was insensible to every personal inconvenience, so completely and painfully was his mind absorbed by one sad subject. His heart throbbed with increased violence as he approached the metropolis, that vast resort of thousands gay, and thousands sad; the busy, bustling scene of strife and pleasure.

The crowded street, and the noisy clatter of the vehicle over the pavement of Brentford, increased

the nervous excitement of his feelings. He was now almost breathing the same atmosphere as did his beloved family; soon he would press them to his aching heart; and for a brief moment a thrill of joy passed through his frame, though in the next he trembled with foreboding terror. A cold feeling of despair began to pervade his whole being, and he felt as if the eye of the Almighty was for a space turned from him.

When the heart is oppressed with sorrow, every former happiness is little considered. Life is beheld in all its gloom; a dark cloud seems to hang over it, and it is condemned as a scene of universal wretchedness and woe. This is taking a wrong view of things. We should all in affliction endeavor to bear in mind to our great and endless comfort, that we are not, like the unbeliever, left without hope or without God in the world. And when the arrows of adversity are flying thick around us, let us thank the Father of all mercies, that with the evils he sends, he infuses the joyful hope of future peace; and then with submission, we shall drink out of that mixed cup which he has prepared for us all.

The evening had drawn in, and all was gloom and darkness. Captain Cecil alighted at a small inn in Kensington, at which the coach remained for a few minutes, and leaving there his portmanteau, hastily set forth to commence his search for that habitation which contained his precious treasures, but of whose locality he was not accurately informed. He made inquiries at several places in some of the remote streets, but so little was the family known that he was for a time unsuccessful; and he then regretted the haste which had prevented his first seeking Mr. Disney, who would have given him an exact direction. His agitation was increasing at every step he took, when at length chance directed him to the shop of our *ci-devant* friend Mrs. Brown.

He found the good lady in deep gossip with a neighbor, and he was obliged to wait a moment before he could command her attention. During that short period, his sensitive ear caught enough of the conversation to agonize his very soul.

"Well, have you heard how the poor lady at No. 10 is this evening?" was the question put to the shopkeeper, who replied, "Ay bless you, indeed I have; and my heart is fit to break! She is as bad as she can be; quite delirious, her head entirely gone—raving of her husband, who it seems is somewhere over the sea; more's the pity—or the shame! And then those poor young creatures; it wings one's heart to see them. I have been over several times to see if I can do anything for them; and oh! to see that beautiful girl—so pale, so wanlike—and yet quite the lady through it all. Lawd a me!" added the kind soul, wiping with her broad fat hand, the tears which fell abundantly from her eyes,—"I could give a good deal to be of some service to them. But in my opinion, the mother is as good as a dead woman."

Whilst this conversation was going on, Captain Cecil stood like one transfixed. His whole frame appeared to become rigid, his countenance pale as marble; while trying in vain even to articulate, he stood like the statue of despair. His strange appearance at length caught the eye of Mrs. Brown and her companion. They looked at each other with surprise mingled almost with alarm, for he might have been considered distracted. The good woman

however, who had much of the "milk of human kindness" in her composition, in a moment began to feel the tide of compassion rushing into her heart, and she said in a kind tone of voice, "Pray, sir, is there anything that I can do for you?"

Captain Cecil, thus addressed, endeavored to speak, which he did in almost unintelligible sounds, "Can you tell me where a family of the name of Norton live?"

"Why, God help me, that I can," she said, looking at him earnestly in the face, which in a moment strongly reminded her of Herbert's; when, with the natural quickness of her sex in divination, the whole truth flashed upon her mind. But she avoided any comment, and continued—"But you don't seem quite well like, and I won't tell you a word until you have taken a little drop of what I shall bring you in a moment—or rather you shall come with me;" and with a delicacy which at once did credit to her heart and head, she led Captain Cecil unresistingly into her little back parlor, and closing the door, made him sit down.

He obeyed her passively. He had heard enough to convince him that his worst fears were realized; and harassed to the utmost with fatigue of body, and anguish of mind, he sunk into a chair. The proud man almost in the impatience of his deep sorrow might have been tempted to exclaim, "Hath he forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?" But the eye of mercy still looked upon him even in those troubled days. His almost breaking heart, at length found relief in tears; and the brave, the manly and distinguished sailor, covering his face with his hands, wept long and bitterly.

It is a woman's province to weep. It is her weapon of defence—her most eloquent pleader. But to a man, for every tear, a drop of blood extracted from the heart can scarcely be more torturing; while to witness it, is almost as painful. Poor Mrs. Brown, who was truly one of those "who weep with those who weep," was in a moment sobbing by his side.

"Now don't take on so," she said, in her homely manner of comforting; "I am afraid you are thinking of what I said just now. But pick up a heart, do, my good sir. Don't you know that whilst there's life, there's hope? And I have heard," she continued, seeing that he began to listen with more tranquillity, "the lady has been nearly as bad before. And now take the word of an honest woman, that you will very likely carry the cure; for from what I can pick up, I think mayhap if her husband was with her, she would go on well."

Grief enfeebles and softens the most manly mind; and Captain Cecil listened like a child to the words of his well-meaning though unpolished consoler. At her last sentence, he brightened a little, and starting from his seat, and seizing her hand with as much devotion as if it had been soft and fair, he begged her to conduct him immediately to the house he sought.

"Yes, that I will—but not before you have swallowed this," the positive Mrs. Brown replied, going to a cupboard and producing a bottle and glass, from which she poured some port wine, and insisted upon his drinking every drop. "And now, sir," she said, "you must be a man, and not go for to give way, for those poor young folks have had a weary time enough of it already."

"My darling good children!—and are they all quite well?"

"Oh! bravely, sir—and a gentleman—a fine good-looking one he is too—has taken away the two pretty little misses and their brother, that they might not make a noise to disturb the poor lady. And indeed he seems kind like, for he comes every day, and is always sending a power of things to make them comfortable."

"And who is he?" exclaimed Captain Cecil impatiently.

"Oh! I don't know. He is incognitur, I suppose, like other people," and here Mrs. Brown could not help pursing up her mouth, and looking rather in a sinister manner at Captain Cecil.

"By the by," he added, recollecting for the first time the peculiar position in which he unfortunately stood in England, "I have indeed told you that I am the husband of this lady in whom you so kindly take an interest, but I have important reason for not wishing to be known. Will you, my good madam, be so kind as to keep my secret?"

"That I will, or cut my tongue out first," was the reply, and Captain Cecil with a heart which beat almost audibly, followed Mrs. Brown across the road. In an instant they stood before the door, which was half open, as a servant maid was just taking in some medicine. Here the kind woman left him; with that instinctive delicacy which often exists beneath the roughest exterior, she knew that the scene which must ensue was sacred.

She returned home wiping her eyes, and saying to herself, "Well, poor man, this is indeed what I call sorrow. God grant he may find his poor wife better! though I fear there is little hope of that. Tell of him, poor gentleman! If I knew that he had robbed my till, or shot at the king, I couldn't have the heart to appear against him, when he is in such trouble. I wonder who he is, though? I wish Jeemes was at home, but perhaps I had better not tell him. Lawk! there's incogniturs for you! I'd give something to get them out of my head, it bothers me sadly. What business have I with gentlemen in disguise? I'm just a regular fool," and Mrs. Brown went muttering on till she fairly got into her shop and shut the door. When there, the truth is, she could not settle to her day-book; but kept staring at a glimmering light in the opposite window, imagining that from looking she might guess a little what was going forward within the house of sickness.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"But thou canst hear! and love
May richly on a human tone be poured;
And the least cadence of a whispered word
A daughter's love may prove."

WHILE Mrs. Brown was thus occupied, Captain Cecil entered the home of his family. He passed quickly by the servant, and at once ascended the narrow staircase which was opposite to the door, scarcely aware of his own movements, so great was the agitation of his mind. He found himself upon the landing-place, where two closed doors presented themselves to his view. His hand was on the lock of one; should he enter? He turned it softly, and looked in. It was a small back apartment, and though a light was burning, he perceived no one; but upon a bed he could distinguish the form of an infant laid beneath the bed-clothes. The first impulse of the father's heart was to enter, and to look at his sleeping child. As he stooped and kissed the unconscious babe, tears fell upon it; tears of an-

guish, tempered, however, by a warm gush of paternal love.

He started suddenly round, for sounds from the next room met his ear, and he then perceived a half-open door which before had escaped his notice. He advanced softly towards it, and looking cautiously in, what a sight then met his eye.

Mrs. Cecil, stretched upon the bed, apparently almost in a lifeless state, Herbert supporting her head, which was bleeding copiously from the effect of leeches, upon his bosom. Her hair was all drawn from her fair forehead, at once revealing the whole of a countenance which, to her husband's agonized mind, appeared already to bear the stamp of death. Rachel and the nurse were both busied in staunching the blood which flowed from the poor sufferer's temples. There was still another object in the group—poor Evelyn, who, exhausted by sorrow and watching, had sunk upon her knees for relief and rest, at the foot of the bed, with her face buried in the clothes. The outline of the kneeling figure was almost as indicative of anguish as though her sorrowful countenance had been revealed.

The wretched man gazed on the scene as if his eyes had been fascinated by the glare of the rattlesnake; but exhausted nature had now most completely weakened his every power, he could bear no more; but even in the moment that he felt himself fainting, thinking of the shock it would be to the one beloved whose presence suddenly made known to her, he staggered down the contracted staircase, and sunk at the foot in a state of utter insensibility.

When Captain Cecil by degrees felt a return of consciousness, he could scarcely remember where he was, or what were the events which had so lately occurred. He felt the tender pressure of a small hand, warm tears fell upon his face, and, could it be possible? soft lips pressed again and again upon his cheeks and forehead. He fancied he heard the sweet word "father," breathed into his ear; but he was dreaming surely—he was in France, and this was one of those deceitful visions which had so often mocked him during his miserable slumbers.

He suddenly opened his eyes. They rested upon the person of a tall majestic-looking man, standing by his side, whose features were at once well known to him; but so unlooked for was his appearance, and so totally beyond the verge of possibility, that he again closed his eyes, certain that he beheld only the phantom of some delirium or feverish dream. But again he heard that angel voice whispering in his ear, again he felt his cheeks bedewed with tears, whilst these words were uttered distinctly, "Father! dear father! look upon your child, your Evelyn!"

The whole truth rushed upon his senses, he raised himself from the couch upon which he had been placed; and turning round, in an instant his child was in his arms.

Oh! how fervent—how ecstatic were the emotions of tenderness, which for a few moments they both enjoyed; it was the fulness of the purest of all affections; and the poor father, as he clasped to his heart his good, his excellent child, wept; but they were tears of comfort which now fell from his eyes. He felt that the voice which could still the raging deep, was about to speak peace to his soul, and to turn his tears to joy. In his deep affliction he was not to be abandoned. In the midst of judgment, mercy had yet been remembered; light had arisen out of darkness!

At length the first burst of rapturous feeling had in part subsided, and the heart of the husband again trembled.

"Your mother, Evelyn, your poor mother, she is very ill?" was the question, half assertion, half inquiry, which he timidly made.

"She is very ill, she is, dear papa, and has been very much worse; but indeed at this moment she is better. Herbert is now watching by her, that no suspicion of your return may arise to agitate her. But now that we have got you back, and our dear clever Dr. T——, whom this kind friend brought to us last night, we may hope that my darling mother may soon recover; already she is better."

"I thank Heaven for its mercies," Captain Cecil exclaimed, leaning back on the couch, and, pressing his hand upon his eyes, he remained for some minutes silent.

Evelyn now turned towards the Duke of Strathhaven, who having called for the last *bulletin* ere he joined his aged friend Mrs. Cecil at dinner, had been the means of assisting the recovery of her unfortunate son, after having with the aid of Herbert placed him on the couch where he now rested. Evelyn's expressive look seemed to ask the Duke whether she should now present him to her father. He paused ere he replied to her tacit question, for there was a strange agitation at his heart. At this moment Captain Cecil lifted his eyes, and fixed them with an anxious and bewildered look upon the Duke, as he said—

"Tell me, dear Evelyn, for my mind is in a strange chaos: do I see the Duke of Strathhaven?"

"Yes, indeed you do, my dear friend," the Duke himself replied, but to you I would fain be still the simple Walter Fitz-Henry whom you once loved."

By an effort the astonished man sprang from the couch; and though scarcely able to support himself, pressed fervently the hand of the Duke, as he said—

"Do I hear aright? Does the Duke of Strathhaven claim the affection given to the noble Fitz-Henry?"

"He does! he does!" was the reply, and the two friends, after a long life of separation, were in one short minute firmly reunited; and with hand clasped in hand, poured forth the warmest expressions of friendship and pleasure.

The Duke at length said, "I shall leave it to Miss Cecil to relate how I discovered the rear end of your coldness to your ancient comrade, my dear friend. I must now say adieu! and hasten to tell the joyful news of your return to your excellent mother, and her little grandchildren. You will explain to Captain Cecil," he added turning to Evelyn, as he was about to withdraw, "how it is that I have at present such dear and cherished inmates of my home."

"No, my dear sir, you must not leave us just at this moment," Evelyn said earnestly, and taking his hand affectionately, almost forced him to sit by Captain Cecil, who had again sunk on the couch. "I have indeed a history to tell," she continued, as she fell on her knees before her father, and scarcely conscious of the position she had taken in the enthusiasm of the moment, she repeated, "I have indeed a history to tell! but how can I sufficiently describe all we owe to this friend? How can I express the prompt and deep sympathy he has evinced for our sorrows—how speak of the tender assiduity, the active exertion with which he has befriended us?"

You must thank him, dear father, your must join your voice in grateful thanks to Edwin's, to our benefactor."

It was a touching and beautiful sight to see this lovely girl kneeling in all the unstudied gracefulness of innocence and deep feeling, seeking the expressions which would portray the grateful emotions of her heart. Her beautiful hair was parted on her fair brow; her large blue eyes were raised with earnest looks of appeal to her father, and then again beamed forth ineffable softness on him upon whose benevolence she would fain enlarge, while her small white hands were pressed upon her heaving bosom, the beauty of her whole form and countenance, rendered still more strikingly impressive by the attitude she had unconsciously taken, was almost unearthly in its loveliness.

The Duke gazed upon her, until the intensity of his feelings made him forgetful of every other consideration. He now allowed her to proceed without interruption; though before he had made many futile efforts to raise her from the ground and to stay the current of her eloquence. Although he was the theme of her praise he now heard not what she said, he only saw, and thought with painful rapture of the angelic being who thus knelt before him. He was, however, roused from a reverie of delight, mingled with feelings of torturing regret, by Captain Cecil himself uttering the warm expressions of gratitude, which the knowledge now imparted to him, of the identity of the Duke of Strathhaven with the generous friend of his destitute boy called forth.

With much earnestness the Duke besought his friend to say no more upon the subject, which evidently distressed and overpowered him; adding, "If I have done well, I am as thankful as you can be; but, my dear friend, do not torture me with thanks; for if you could only see into my heart, I fear you would find that my motives have only been too selfish;—the gratification to myself, my most powerful principle. Who could know your children and not feel for them deeply and unceasingly?" and his eyes rested upon the countenance of Evelyn, who was now standing in an attitude of graceful listlessness by her father's side.

There was something in that glance which for the first time spoke in a peculiar manner to the heart of the unsophisticated girl. It brought a quick bright blush into her cheeks; and she felt that she must avert her eyes rather than encounter the look of passionate tenderness with which the Duke regarded her. To the innocent heart of Evelyn this was all very new—very strange; and her bosom heaved with reciprocal emotion. She hastily made an excuse to leave the room; saying that she would send Herbert to join his father, while she took his place beside the sleepless couch of her, who now required such assiduous watching.

When they were alone the Duke besought Captain Cecil to make his mind easy upon every subject connected with pecuniary affairs; adding, "Do not feel angry or hurt that I, almost a stranger, should be intimately acquainted with your present necessities. A sincere friend has united with me, in making everything easy for the present. So farewell, dear Cecil," he concluded, pressing the hand he held with much warmth; and before the amazed and grateful friend could speak, the Duke of Strathhaven had left the house.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"There breathes a self divinity in virtue—
In candid, unassuming, generous virtue,
Whose very silence speaks; and which inspires
Without proud formal lessons, a disdain
Of mean injurious vice."

"By the by, Fitz-Henry," exclaimed Mr. Villars to the young Lord, as they were riding side by side in the solitude, and amidst the autumnal dust and dead leaves of the Park, "I have forgotten to ask you, how you got on with your Kensington flame. You were red-hot about her the other day, but seem to have cooled very suddenly; for not a word more have I heard you utter about her."

"Well you may now drop the subject entirely, Fred; for it is a very sore one to me," replied Fitz-Henry, with that sort of frown which unpleasant recollections produce. "The truth is, I have been completely thrown over; and if I gave you a thousand and one days, you'd never guess my rival. Upon my word I am not quite sure whether I should tell you anything about it; but I have been so bewildered, so stunned; that I am going to take the old women's comfort, and talk about it. I have scarcely yet recovered the regular shock the deuced business gave me."

"I am all curiosity," said Mr. Villars, scarcely understanding whether his friend was in jest or earnest; and not knowing how to account for the serious expression of his countenance, with the inclination to smile betrayed by his lips, "Well, what is it? get on, pray."

"Villars, what do you think of my passing at least half an hour, in a dirty, greasy, infernal chandler's shop, opposite to the house where I found that my beauty lived? There was I, pumping with all my might a fat groceress, and paying dearly for all the information I obtained; not only by being stifled to death with the pestilence of tallow candles and every kind of filthiness, but actually obliged for the sake of probability to buy a score of pig's meat and rancid cheeses, for which I even paid ready money. Well, I got enough out of the fusty dame, however, to interest and excite me to the highest pitch, when in the midst of our colloquy, and whilst I was still standing staring at the abode of my Venus, and listening to my fat friend's story, who should march up to the house, and walk in with the air of a privileged person, but—now, Fred, guess if you can."

"Don't be provoking, Fitz-Henry—tell me at once."

"Well, would you believe it possible, when I tell you that it was the renowned, the illustrious, the proud, the severe, the virtuous, Duke of Strathhaven—my respected father!"

Frederick Villars started, and certainly looked as much surprised as his friend's story was intended to make him; but in another moment he burst into a fit of laughter.

"This is, indeed, too capital! My poor Fitz, you are done indeed." He then added, in a more serious tone, "Well, perhaps, it is some consolation to us *malvais sujets*, to know that there is no such thing in this world as perfection. I had really settled the thing in my own mind, that your father was as truly *sans reproche* as we know him to be *sans peur*; and it is a great comfort to find that, as he is mortal as well as ourselves, one may be in his presence without feeling so shrinking a sense of inferiority as I have hitherto done. Not but that I think there is

some misconception in the case; and when I think of his calm, fine countenance; as unruffled by the passions as by the follies of us poor mortals, I'd almost stake this clever mare that I am now riding, that some likeness of the Duke has deceived your love-dazzled eyes."

"My father is more beholden to you for your good opinion, it appears, than are my powers of perception; however, you have only heard half, Villars. The conclusion of my story will convince you there is some extraordinary *liaison* with his Grace and this Kensington nymph," Fitz-Henry said with some petulance.

"Poor Fitz!" exclaimed Mr. Villars, rather maliciously, "you have then no chance—no hope of success; for what merit, my poor fellow! have you to boast of, when put into competition with your incomparable father? You have the advantage, certainly, of being some few years younger; you possess a slender figure, an aquiline nose, a bad likeness of his (*par parenthese*;) you wear a good coat, ride a good horse, and really make up well, *mais voilà tout*;—the outside of the edifice is all we must speak about."

"Thank you, Villars; you're kind and complimentary," Lord Fitz-Henry said, wondering how he ever liked a man who, though he was a capital fellow in society, and would really stand by a friend in a row, had an ungentelemanly habit of preaching, or, what he called, "setting forth truths."

"But am I not right, Fitz?" continued Mr. Villars, rather warming with the subject. "Don't you think with me, that the Duke is exactly the man for a woman to worship, if once he casts his eye with affection upon her; to the infinite disparagement of such *ephemeræ* as you and I, Fitz? I know the sex pretty well; and though the majority of them are enthusiastic little devils, there is a good deal of ambition mixed up with their romance and genuine feelings. They love the sublime, as well as the beautiful, my fine fellow. Your father is a glorious creature; and you know what Bulwer says, 'Love borrows greatly from opinion. Pride above all things strengthens affection.' How could a woman resist such love as the Duke of Strathhaven's—so noble, so generous! Though you are his son, he is still in the prime of his age; his figure is fine, his countenance magnificent. And then only reflect upon his general character; his life of glory, the estimation which he holds in the world: what woman would not feel the proudest of her sex to be the object of his *dévotion*?"

"Fred, you are very eloquent in your *tirade* on my lordly father's success with women; but you need not have laid it on so completely at my expense. It is deuced hard to have one's rival's merits brought in array before one, though that rival may be one's father."

"My dear Fitz-Henry, the truth is, that I cannot forbear contrasting your father and such nonentities as ourselves. My mare and the fly upon her ear are as little to be compared. When I think of the noble Strathhaven, and consider all that he has done for his country; the life of activity and usefulness which he has led;—when I see his manly bearing, and fine military figure, so superior to the enervated elaborately dressed idler of our *clique*, who live but for sunshine and sensual enjoyments; whose existence is wasted in selfish pursuits; whose talents, if they chanced to possess any, are frittered away in

dissipation; I cannot but sigh at the sickening contrast. The season of vigor and early manhood,—how do we spend it? The precious hours glide swiftly away, but how few are marked with spiritual, moral, or intellectual improvement? Fitz-Henry, you will think that I am prosing, and so perhaps I am; but you are my friend, and with all your faults I regard you as such; so you must bear with me, and with the cauda I am about to put to my exordium. Don't knock me down, Fitz: but you, with your youth and good looks, and high *ton* and refined taste, are as inferior to your father as—as—as I am; who, God knows! consider myself a very worm in his path."

The young men were both silent for a few minutes. At length Fitz-Henry resumed the conversation by asking, "Are you not going to listen to the end of my story? it is a mysterious business, I can assure you. But you are so confoundedly fond of hearing yourself talk, my wonders go for nothing."

"I am all attention, Fitz."

"Well, then," commenced Fitz-Henry, looking at once important and critical, "yesterday morning I happened to be up early, wishing to go out of town to see my colt take its gallop. On returning, it occurred to me that I might as well turn in, as I passed Strathhaven House, and pay my respects to the governor, who I have not seen for six weeks, and who fancied me in Paris. The groom of the chambers informed me that his Grace was at breakfast. 'Alone, I suppose?' said I. 'Yes, my lord; there is no one with his grace, excepting the two young ladies.' Young ladies! thought I, who the devil can they be? 'Who are they?' inquired I. 'Oh! only the little Miss Cecils.' 'Show me in,' I said, rather curious on the subject. Well, the door of the library was opened, and what did I see but my illustrious sire, whose sword it seems is turned into a pap-boat rather than a plough-share, sitting and assisting two little girls to breakfast, who were placed at either side of him. They were certainly as lovely as angels, one quite young; four or five, I suppose; and the other some years older. I looked surprised, as I felt; and the Duke was evidently put out, for he actually turned red. 'I don't disturb you, I hope,' I said. 'Oh! no, not in the least, sit down;' and he rang for more breakfast. I had not intended to stay; but my curiosity was excited, so I settled myself quietly down by the eldest little girl."

"There was something in the looks of the children which completely mystified me; they were beautiful, and nicely dressed; but I am positive they are the same I saw walking with my beauty on the Kensington road. To the eldest I could swear, she is so like her. I never saw two young ladies more at their ease, or more at home with my father, who they called 'dear Duke' at every word, and he sat looking at them with such love and admiration. Villars, do you think they are my sisters? Upon my honor, from all I heard from the old groceress, with regard to what she calls 'the incognitor of the family,' I should not wonder. This would indeed completely floor me; and the surmise, as it entered my thoughts, went some way to do so. I swallowed my breakfast at first in silence, being somewhat confused; and I saw by a glance that the governor was not quite at his ease and would rather that I had not made my appearance. At length I began to think that I had better make up a little to the female cupids; so I said to the eldest, who was staring

with her large blue eyes fixed upon me, 'And what is your name, pretty one?'

"Laura, sir; and pray what is yours?" she answered, in the prettiest coquettish manner possible.

"My name is Fitz-Henry," I said, rather maliciously: 'I am that gentleman's little boy.'

"Pooh!" she said, pouting her rosy lip, and turning her head indignantly away; 'just as if my dear Duke had such an old boy as you!' Saucy answer, was it not? I looked at the Duke, who smiled, but still did not seem quite comfortable. At this moment, his grace's secretary sent to him to say, a messenger from the Foreign Office was arrived. He rose immediately and left the room. Now, thought I, I will get it all out of these little things; and I had just begun to make play, when in walks the groom of the chambers to tell them they were wanted, and off he marched them, leaving me in the clouds. But," continued the young lord, at once changing his tone, and becoming very red as he pointed to a plain green chariot at a short distance, and for the moment stationary,—"By Jove! there is Jennie's carriage—and there is Rushford—and there he is half in at the window talking to her. I tell you what—this will never do—that man decidedly admires her, and is always dangling after her. I shall just tell him that if he does not take care, he will soon be able to describe the sensations which a horsewhip over the shoulders may occasion."

"Pray do not be such a fool, Fitz-Henry. Come, you had much better leave Rushford to say pretty nothings to mademoiselle Jennie, and ride with me to Grosvenor Square," said Mr. Villars, rather anxiously, seeing a storm brewing in the imperious bosom of his friend.

Fitz-Henry unwillingly turned with him, muttering between his teeth, "I have ceased to care for the girl, who, if she fed on pearls, *a la Cleopatra*, could not be more expensive, but I am not to be made a fool of, Master Rushford!" he then added with a milder expression of countenance, and obeying rather the influence Mr. Villars had gained over his mind than the dictates of good temper.

"I suppose you are of Shakspeare's opinion, Fred! who says—

'I hold him but a fool that will endanger
His body for a girl that loves him not.'

So be it; perhaps I had better defer the horsewhipping, and go with you to Grosvenor Square. But what are you going to do there?"

"Why, call on Julian Sinclair. I hear all the Clairville party are in town; the baroness, heiress, and all."

"Julian Sinclair, and Grosvenor Square! why, my good fellow, have you been living in the clouds, or the Thames-tunnel? Why poor Sinclair has been lying these last ten days on the point of death, in Belgrave Square, with as broken a head as a man need have. Fitz-Irby, who is in town because Lady de Cressy is here, thinks Sinclair's illness a feint, and a roundabout way of securing a *bonne fortune*; but I think he is wrong; hear what the Adder says on the subject," he added, taking a small, but greatly poisonous newspaper from his bosom, and reading—

"We learn that Dr. S— and Mr. B— have declared their opinion, that the Honorable J. S— has sustained a slight concussion of the brain in consequence of his fall on the 20th inst. As a change of residence would be attended with considerable risk, he is still an inmate of Mr. St. J—'s house, at

whose door the accident occurred. We understand that the beautiful Lady F— remains in town to watch over the unfortunate sufferer; that lady being an expert adept at St. John Long's method of cure that of producing a counter-irritation. It is said she has already rubbed a considerable wound in the young man's left side.—Query, is this family of kin to the late St. John Long? 'Ay, there's the rub!'

"There, Villars, what do you understand by that?"

"Not much, I must confess. But give me some plain version of the story," replied Mr. Villars.

"Oh! it is soon and simply told; and I have it from Fitz-Irby, who had it from Lady Florence herself, as the most approved gossips would say. Julian Sinclair rode to Belgrave Square for the purpose of calling upon the St. Johns, on a young and skittish horse. It appears that Lady Florence was in the balcony watching his approach, and waiting to address some words to her, before he dismounted. A pestilential Punch took the opportunity of making some discordant exclamation, which so frightened the horse, that it first plunged, and then rearing, Sinclair fell with his head on the pavement, the horse falling upon him. Lady Florence managed to get down, and was already by his side, before she fainted, and the two inanimate bodies were then carried into the house together, while a score of messengers were sent for a score of surgeons. The result of their inspection of Mr. Sinclair's hurt was as 'the Adder' relates,—they pronounced it a concussion of the brain, and that the patient must on no account be removed. I am not acquainted with the Clairvilles, neither am I inclined to seek their acquaintance, as I understand her ladyship calls me the Duke's 'forlorn hope.'"

Villars smiled, but made no comment on Lady Clairville's *mot*, but asking Fitz-Henry to accompany him, they both galloped off to Belgrave Square, to make inquiries concerning the unfortunate Julian.

CHAPTER XXX.

"She sleeps! O gentle Sleep, shed from thy wings
Balsamic life o'er all her tender frame!
From Eden's pure and peaceful fount
Draw forth some drops of liquid crystal,
And sprinkling them where from her lovely cheek
The rose is fled, restore the glowing tints;
And thou sweet peace of virtue and of love,
Thou fairest of the Graces, with thy wing,
Oh! shade my Mary!"

These words might well be imagined to occur to the thoughts of Captain Cecil, as he sat by the side of his sleeping wife.

It was an affecting sight, the interior of this chamber, although comfort and consolation had there found admittance, and spread their influence over the afflicted family.

Captain Cecil had taken his place as the tender nurse of his beloved wife. She had hitherto been unconscious what happiness was hovering over her, still thinking that she was tended by her excellent son, in those moments when her reason, less obscured than it had been, suffered her to think at all; but her mind was still in a very unsettled state.

Most fortunately, before Captain Cecil's arrival, the Duke, whose watchful kindness exceeded all description, had discovered that the physician who was in the habit of attending the family, and whose name they all invoked with such fervor, was expected in London. With attentive care he arranged that his return should be immediately made known to him; and catching him as he was stepping out of

his carriage, made him enter his own, and brought him in triumph to Kensington.

The skilful practitioner knew at once how to proceed with his patient, whom he had often attended before under almost similar circumstances; and when Captain Cecil so unexpectedly made his appearance before his family, the skill and experience of Dr. T—— had already produced much happy effect. Still Mrs. Cecil was in a most precarious state of mind and body.

In the darkened room, Captain Cecil was safe from any sudden discovery on the part of the invalid. Not that they wished to prevent her knowing that her husband was with her; on the contrary, it was supposed the knowledge of his vicinity would tend much to tranquillize the fearful excitement of her nervous system. Still it was of the utmost consequence to avoid any agitating surprise, and Dr. T—— was anxious that the truth of his presence might by degrees force itself upon her imagination; in the confused state of her mind, he thought it probable, that her sorrowful separation from him might pass as one of the dreadful dreams with which she had been haunted in her delirium.

We will not lift the veil which would disclose the weakness of a diseased mind, nor portray the sad effects of sickness and sorrow.

For some days Captain Cecil found the task he had undertaken most distracting to his feelings, and his devoted heart writhed with anguish to see the wife of his bosom sunk to the lowest state of mental and bodily weakness. How severe was the trial to hear her call upon him, whom she thought in lonely exile, in the piteous accents of suffering affection! How did her lamentations jar upon his ear, for they were the first he had heard her utter! When in her natural state of mind, no sorrow could have exerted from her a word which might have conveyed complaint or reproach to the heart of him she loved, oh! how devoted!;

Captain Cecil's mind had been gradually prepared for the ordeal through which he was now passing. By tasting freely of the bitter cup, his naturally excellent heart had been gradually schooled to affliction, and was at length enabled to look beyond the sorrow which endureth but for a season to the further and higher view religion pointed out to him. He was now equipped for the storms as well as for the calms of the dubious navigation of life. In the dark and solitary hour of his distress, with a mind bruised and sore from the recent wounds of fortune, he had looked back to the view then exhibited to him by solitude and reflection, of a life thrown away in vanity, fault, and follies; and his heart quailed within him. But now he was comparatively serene. The agitation of passion was calmed, and a softening balm infused into the wounds of his spirit. He now could disclose to an invisible friend those rankling hurts which He alone could heal. His heart was lightened, and he heard a voice which whispers "peace" to those only whose hope is fixed above this world. He beheld the hand of Providence conducting all the hidden springs of life, and felt that the afflictions which to others appear the messengers of wrath, are sent in wisdom and in mercy. His more enlightened eye could now behold the angel who rides the whirlwind and directs the storm, and yet protects the fragile floweret of the valley; in short, he saw God in all his infinite and everlasting power, and he blessed and praised the hand which had thus removed his previous blindness.

One happy day Mrs. Cecil slept long and calmly; and as her anxious husband sat motionless by her side, he murmured thanksgivings for every hour of repose which she gained, and with reviving hopes awaited the moment of her waking as a crisis of her malady, and which he prayed might soon restore her to his hopes.

His fervent wishes were realized, and shortly, though enfeebled to an extreme degree of helplessness, she was happy in her husband's arms, with restored reason and perfect consciousness.

Though completely aware of the fragile state of her health, she still felt secure as if his loved presence would ward off the approach of death, and that to see him, to hear his dear and well-known voice, and feel the warm tear of affection drop upon her cheek, was at once a charm against evil,—bliss, by which she was compensated for every past suffering. She was too happy for the utterance of her feelings. She lay in a state of weakness almost unto death: but still she knew that he was near her; that it was his hand which she held clasped within her own; that they were *his* lips which impressed warm kisses on her brow, and doubly was she blessed. Though unable to speak, still she could look her love, and meet with gladness those same glances of tender affection which first won her maiden heart. Sometimes she would start from a short slumber, and look anxiously around, until she saw the one dear form bending over her. Then she would take his hand; and laying it on her bosom, again fall asleep with all the tranquillity and happy security of a child. How sacred and holy is the love which springs from the bosom of a wife, transcending all other human affections! A mother may experience the same touching solicitude for another's welfare, the same tender sympathy which alleviates affliction, the same participating pleasure which heightens prosperity and joy itself; but it is still the gentle egotism of the heart extending from self to the offspring; a continuation of individual existence in the person of another. Conjugal affection is all gratuitous, all disinterested; it springs at once in the heart, free from a second motive; it is brought into existence by no tie of kindred, no community of interest; but gathering force from those circumstances, it increases with increasing years, and only leaves the bosom which its genial influence has warmed with the spirit by which it has been animated; a spirit whose last earthly hope is to be rejoined in a happier sphere by him whose excellence and virtues may there meet their reward.

In the blissful state of re-union Captain Cecil now enjoyed; he forgot for a time every worldly care. He thought not of his debts or embarrassments, or of the difficulties of his position and of his circumstances. He existed but for the moment, for the joy of watching with his beloved children, every turn in the countenance of their mother, which spoke of returning health.

But he had friends who did not forget the frightful situation in which he stood in London, in the midst of danger and probable annoyance. True it was that he remained in strict seclusion in the obscure house at Kensington; but still there were too many channels for the betrayal of his return to England, for those to be without much anxiety on his account, whose happiness and peace depended on his security. Herbert and Evelyn were in painful consciousness of the precarious nature of their father's present safety; but how urge to him the

necessity of his leaving them? How tell to the being who was dear to them as their own existence that he must for their, for his own sake, quit the new-found happiness which his every word convinced them was great in proportion as the separation from his family had been cruel and afflicting? They could not make the prudential remonstrance; but his life in daily dread lest his place of concealment should be discovered, and himself dragged from the side of his almost expiring wife to all the disgrace and horrors of a prison.

CHAPTER XXXI.

"I wish not it was mine to wear
Flush'd honor's sunny crown;
I wish I were not Fortune's heir,—
She frowns, and let her frown.

"I have no taste for pomp or strife,
Which others love to find;
I only wish the bliss of life—
A still and quiet mind."

WHILE these events were, taking place in the Cecil family, time passed slowly and monotonously with one, who held their interests dear at heart, and who inwardly repined at the obstacles which still kept her from them. After the short and hurried interview at the nursery-man's, the Lady de Cressy had looked fondly and anxiously for the further intelligence from her cousins, which Evelyn had half-promised her. Still the letter came not, and she felt almost disposed to accuse poor Evelyn of unkindness.

The first opportunity she could find, she related to the Duke of Strathaven the particulars of their meeting, and the sad disappointment her cousin's silence occasioned. His Grace, she thought, almost showed a want of feeling, in the smiling manner in which he bid her have patience, and trust that time might soon reunite her to the Cecils; at the same time saying that as much as he must feel disposed to facilitate their meeting, still motives of delicacy regarding the prohibition of Captain Cecil forbade his taking any steps in the affair for the present. Blanche tried to be consoled,—tried to believe that he had some happy reason for his gaiety, and that soon all would be well. Still she felt dispirited, and more than ever anxious; wondering if the Duke had any relation with her cousins, and how it had commenced; and at the same time half angry with herself that she had not taken courage, and questioned him upon the subject.

Blanche was walking pensively and alone one morning in the Square, her mind filled with the most melancholy thoughts. She had felt all the day disconsolate and desolate in the extreme. Julian she was not permitted to see; and though assured by Lady Clairville, who passed much of her time at the house of Mr. St. John, where he had remained ever since his dreadful accident, that her son was in no immediate danger, and that as long as strict quiet and care were observed, his surgeons promised he would do well, still she felt much alarm on his account, knowing how difficult a task it would be to keep him as tranquil as his fearful situation rendered necessary.

To add to the gloom which Blanche experienced, her faithful and dear friend Mrs. Stewart was confined to her room by indisposition; she was therefore quite alone. For some days she had not seen the Duke of Strathaven, and this worried and perplexed her, for he had promised to do much for those upon

whom her thoughts continually dwelt. The money which she had obtained from her governess, she had placed in his hands; and he had promised to dispose of it for the immediate benefit of the family. He moreover assured her that the purchase of Herbert's commission was nearly completed; still there was mystery in his manner, and he appeared to feel a delicacy towards Lady Clairville which in a measure seemed to restrain his talking to her respecting the arrangements to be made for the whole of the Cecil family. Indeed the last words he had spoken to her seemed to intimate as much; and it was with evident sincerity that he had said, "I wish most devoutly, my dear Lady de Cressy, that your uncle and his charming family were soon to be re-established at Riversdale. You would all then be at liberty to do as would seem best to you; and I should then escape the implication of leading Lady Clairville's charming ward and niece into secret rebellion."

Lady de Cressy thought much of these words, and they again occurred to her as she sauntered listlessly and ill at ease within the dusty enclosure of the Square. Looking at the parched yellow-tinted grass, and the blackened trees, she could not help reverting to the country, and all the charms it had for her at this season of the year; the bright, clear, enjoyable autumn, with beauties so peculiar to itself: the varied coloring of the foliage; the fresh exhilarating air; the merry youthful party assembled in days gone by. Her cousins Herbert and Julian, who were wont to hail this season with such peculiar delight, arose also before her "mind's eye," their forms speaking of health and happiness in their shooting-dresses, so glad, so gay. Where were they now? One stretched upon a bed of sickness, liable to danger in every way, she too well knew that; the other—where, indeed was that other? He seemed still lost to her, though her hopes had been so high for their early meeting; and the tears rose to her eyes as she inwardly ejaculated,—

"Oh! Herbert, that I could see you once more."

Poor Blanche, though she was an heiress, with every external advantage, still was not to be envied. She lacked that which alone could constitute the felicity she sought—companionship with those she loved. It was this alone which she felt could make her lot desirable. Her fortune at this moment seemed her bane; and she considered it a fetter which debarred her from doing anything to which her inclination pointed. "If," she inwardly repeated, "this money is not to be put to the use for which alone I could ever prize it, then would I gladly exchange it for the freedom of an insignificant position in life: but if it is ever to be the blessed means of making him happy whom most I love—of placing him in the situation he is so fitted to adorn, then indeed will this wealth be precious, and I shall look back even with gratification to all the sacrifices of social comfort which I now undergo." A bright smile here played upon her expressive countenance, and her tears were dried by the happy imaginations of her heart. She thought of her own fair domains, her beautiful castle—her woods—her vales; and then bright images of future happiness connected with them danced gaily before her fancy. She saw her beloved cousin in his own halls, surrounded by every blessing, whilst she was by his side, whose hand had led to this felicity. She saw him in all the pride of manly beauty, and with every thing that was excellent and good emanating from his expres-

live countenance, and for a few minutes Blanche was in an ecstasy of anticipated joy.

She walked quickly on, heedless of the approach of two persons who had gained access into the Square by the assistance of the gardener, and were now approaching her. She hardly noticed them, until one of them, a little boy, had flown up to her, and in another moment was in her arms. Warm and close was the embrace of the cousins, for Blanche saw at once that it was Edwin Cecil who was almost strangling her by his caresses. His arms were tightly encircling her neck, whilst her bonnet was almost crushed by the violence of the thousands of kisses which he impressed upon her cheeks. "Dearest, darling Blanche!" and "My own sweet Edwin!" were the only words that could be heard for some time; and the Duke of Strathhaven, who was standing before the young Baroness, with his eyes glistening at this scene of affection, was obliged in mercy to release her from her too demonstrative companion, as she was nearly sinking from the weight of the boy, who was suspended round her neck. He disengaged him from her arms, but still Edwin took possession of a hand which he hugged to his bosom.

"But, Edwin, how came you here, darling?" inquired Blanche, when the first surprise of the meeting was a little over.

"Oh! he brought me," answered the boy, pointing to the Duke. "I suppose you know that Laura, and Lucy, and I are staying at his house, with somebody you love very dearly."

"I know nothing," said Blanche looking rather reproachfully towards the Duke.

"What!" Edwin continued, "don't you know, that he has got me a nomination for the Charter-house, and has been such a friend to us, that Evelyn says—and she loves him quite as well as I do—that he must have been sent from heaven to be our comfort! At least I heard her say something like that to Herbert."

"Hush! my little fellow," interrupted the Duke; "remember your promise."

"Yes, indeed I will; but," continued Edwin in an audible under tone to Blanche, "do you know that we loved him before we knew that he was a Duke. Are you not surprised at such a great man taking so much pains to be kind to such a little boy as I am?"

"There cannot be a sweeter little boy, darling Edwin; but, tell me all about your mamma, your sisters, and Herbert."

"Ah! Blanche, you blush as you used to do, when you sometimes spoke of Herbert. Do you remember when I used to laugh, and how angry he was with me and you too? Oh! those were happy days, Blanche dear!—we were all so merry and funny then; and we have been so very, very miserable since!" and here tears filled the eyes of both cousins.

"Edwin, you must tell me where I can find them all," said Blanche anxiously.

"Oh! no; you must ask the dear Duke; I have promised to leave all that is to be said to him. Come here, sir, pray," Edwin continued, turning to his benefactor; "I shall tell all if you do not prevent me.—I cannot keep it from dear Blanche."

"Nay, Edwin, if you tell your cousin that, in a short time she will know all: she will not wish you to be any our secret," the Duke said, laughing at

Edwin's fears for his own discretion. He then added to Blanche, "I am going for a moment to Lady Clairville, to ask her to dine with me to-day, and to bring your ladyship with her. If she consents, I promise that you shall meet some one who will tell you all you wish to know. You must make up your mind for a surprise. Now, Edwin, can I trust you alone with your cousin—will you not be tempted to betray me?"

Edwin promised to be silent. It was a hard task to perform, to restrain his little tongue from running riot with all he longed to say; but he resolutely kept his word, and shook his head when the impatient Blanche tried to make him more communicative.

The Duke did not long put his forbearance to the test. He very soon rejoined them, having gained Lady Clairville's consent to dine at Strathhaven House that evening; and he then quitted Blanche, accompanied by Edwin. The little fellow did not fail, first to inflict another series of close hugs, and then cast many a longing lingering look at his cousin after he had left her. Indeed he loved her almost as well as his sister Evelyn; and the meeting her once more seemed to promise the restoration of that happy union with so dear a cousin, which the Duke had told them was likely soon to take place.

Blanche was left in a state of great bewilderment and excitement; but there was a feeling of hope at her heart which gave her spirits a degree of elasticity they had not for some time experienced. It was evident to her perceptions, that the star of the Cecils was again rising, and she felt that if their fortunes were to be taken under the protection of the Duke, his master-spirit and extensive power would infallibly place them where their excellence and virtues might find a proper sphere of action and of happiness.

There was certainly some mystery, however, in the affair; for she recollected most perfectly that some months back the Duke had no acquaintance whatever with the Cecil branch of her family; still it was a mystery of joyful import, and content with that, she sought to dive into it no farther, but entered the drawing-rooms of her aunt with a light step, and countenance glowing with happy expectations.

CHAPTER XXXII.

"What union of all the affections and powers
By which life is exalted, embellish'd, refined,
Was embraced in that spirit!"

"BLANCHE, pray can you inform me what can possess the Duke to ask us to dinner, in this extraordinary and abrupt manner?" exclaimed Lady Clairville, as her niece entered the drawing-room. "He told me that he had seen you in the Square; I must therefore beg for an explanation of all this. May I also be permitted to ask, what are the terms which you and the Duke are upon? Really, the extraordinary intimacy which I have lately witnessed, authorizes me, as your guardian and natural protectress, to insist upon your informing me whether you intend to encourage the addresses of the Duke of Strathhaven?"

Blanche started and colored. She saw at a glance that Lady Clairville was in a state of great excitement and displeasure; but fierce and haughty as was the nature of the aunt, there was a spirit within the breast of the young and delicate being who stood before her, which, when aroused, would not quail beneath injustice and unkindness.

When she had recovered the first surprise which the speech and manner of her aunt had occasioned, the Baroness advanced towards her, and said in a calm, dignified tone of voice, "I must ask your Ladyship to explain to me the meaning of what you have just said; it seems to me somewhat incomprehensible, and I may have mistaken it."

"I repeat," answered Lady Clairville, her eyes flashing with anger—"is it your wish, in defiance of all my long-indulged desires and hopes—is it your wish to marry the Duke of Strathaven, a man old enough to be your father?"

"Such an idea never crossed my imagination, or is Grace's either; therefore I can easily satisfy you on that point. But," continued the Baroness, drawing herself up with an air of dignity which surprised and disconcerted Lady Clairville, "had such a circumstance really existed, and a mutual attachment arisen in our hearts, I should have no hesitation in indulging in such a sentiment, nor should I have considered it necessary to consult even your Ladyship upon its propriety. Too proud must be the woman who could win such a heart as that which beats within the noble breast of the Duke of Strathaven. As for his age, that objection could only have rested with myself, and there could be no obstacle to my making such a choice had it been my desire. As it now is, the Duke of Strathaven is not the object upon whom I have bestowed my affections."

Lady Clairville's eye sunk beneath the glance of her young niece, as she stood with all the pride of her race awakened by the words of her aunt; a pride which flushed her usually placid countenance, and diffused over her whole demeanor that air of indescribable dignity which even repulsed the haughty dame before her. For a moment she was embarrassed, but soon recovering her usual spirit of dominion, she said—

"All this is very well, but I must request that you will be more guarded in your manner towards the Duke. I see that you court his attentions, and even receive visits from him, when I am either in my room, or from home. This is all very improper—quite out of all rule—and you must remember, Blanche," Lady Clairville added, softening her voice and manner, as she perceived that her hitherto quiescent ward was showing symptoms of rebellion, and feeling that she might be going too far, by irritating her more than it was wise for her to do,—“you must remember there is such a person as poor Julian in the world. What would be his feelings if he heard, that whilst he was suffering in mind and in body, you were lavishing attentions upon another, which he hopes one day to win exclusively for himself."

"As we are upon that subject," said Blanche, for a moment a little appalled by her own boldness, "I must at once tell you, aunt, what I have never yet had the courage to reveal. I confess with sorrow and heartfelt shame, that I have been a complete puppet in your hands, and have led you into error from not daring to be explicit; even when you have spoken to me of a marriage between Julian and myself, I have still hesitated to undeceive you."

"Ah! and what have you to say upon that subject now?" cried Lady Clairville, with eagerness and anger depicted upon her countenance. "Do you mean to brave my displeasure by thwarting my favorite hope—the plan which from your earliest

days I have anticipated with so much delight for you, ungrateful girl?"

"Ungrateful I am not," said Blanche, calmly, "but would it not be worse than deceit, did I not take courage to inform you, what sooner or later you must know. Julian can never be my husband."

Lady Clairville's countenance grew dark as night as Blanche continued,—“You are as well aware as I am, that his affections have long been placed upon the sweet, beautiful Evelyn. Is it likely that I should fix my love upon one who was already devoted to another?"

"Blanche, you know that is an infatuation to which my sanction would never be obtained," said Lady Clairville earnestly.

"That I feel does not in any way concern me as far as I my own happiness is brought into question. However, as it regards Julian, whom I love tenderly as a brother, I fear that the pure and excellent feeling which you term infatuation is already weakened; at any rate it has been polluted and degraded by the poison of Lady Florence's society; and with his vacillating disposition, I tremble at the extent of the influence she may gain over him. But still he loves Evelyn sincerely; and if once he escapes the snares of that dangerous woman, he will be true to his angelic cousin. As for me, he never loved me, and he moreover knew that I loved another."

As Blanche ventured to make this disclosure before her terrible aunt, her color deepened, and her whole frame trembled with the emotion it called forth; but still her voice, though low, was firm, and her manner decided.

Lady Clairville was speechless with rage and astonishment. The assertion of Julian's continued attachment to his cousin first conduced to her agitation, though she inwardly rejoiced at the strong measures she had taken for its destruction. But to hear the announcement of another rebellious love, was in itself perfectly overwhelming to her tyrannical and scheming mind.

Blanche, taking advantage of her silence, was determined, now she had dared to venture upon such hazardous ground, at once to be explicit, and to put an end to every idea in which her aunt might still indulge upon the subject of a union with Julian and herself. She therefore continued:—"My choice is made; and as far as I can see into the probabilities of life, I should say irrevocably fixed. I am in no haste to fulfil the wishes of my heart. When I am of age, I shall then communicate with my friends upon the subject. Until then, I will not intrude it upon them. My resolution, extraordinary and wayward as it may appear to you, is taken; and no power on earth will alter it."

Blanche now paused. She was exhausted. Excitement had lent her courage to say so much; but it was over, and she felt almost fainting from the force of contending feelings.

To describe the deep and terrible anger of Lady Clairville would be but to paint a painful and humiliating picture of human nature, displaying the courtied and courtly woman of fashion shorn of her holiday decorations, naked and undisguised, with all the faults of an unconquered spirit clinging to her, disfiguring beauty, and rendering refinement vulgarity. She overwhelmed poor Blanche with a torrent of reproaches, which brought tears from her eyes; but still she was firm. Her aunt reproached her with ingratitude, and this also, to her warm

heart, was most painful; for although she did not love Lady Clairville, still she had supplied the place of a mother to her, however coldly and inadequately she might have fulfilled the duty.

They parted in anger. Blanche, in torrents of tears, and with worn-out spirits—for she was unprepared for the scene of violence which she had just encountered—sought the apartment of Mrs. Stewart; and to her ever-ready ear, she poured forth the history of all her grievances. She was at length soothed by her sympathy, and reassured by all she said upon the subject.

Mrs. Stewart was rejoiced that she had gained courage to be explicit with her aunt; as, to her straight-forward honorable mind, she considered it a degree of duplicity from which she shrunk with disquiet, to allow Lady Clairville to indulge expectations which never were to be realized.

It had ever been her study to inculcate in the mind of her precious charge, a strong and not-to-be-shaken regard for truth. Reflecting unceasingly upon the high destiny of this young heiress, and the conspicuous, responsible part which she might have to perform in the drama of life, it was her anxious wish to surround her with the armor of virtue; she most justly considered that truth was the basis of every estimable quality, one which carries its own light and evidence along with it. It was also her aim while directing the formation of the mind of Lady de Cressy, to render it distinguished for fidelity to every lawful promise she had made, and for constancy in every worthy friendship she had formed; and taught her that no weak compliance, no undue regard for the opinion of others, should ever induce her to swerve from the dictates of conscience. Her fervent prayer was that the beloved child of her care should prove faithful to God and to virtue—faithful to the conviction of her own heart; and that although the world might change around her, still might she be found the same; persevering and steady in uprightness and honor.

With the soothing representations of Mrs. Stewart, Blanche soon recovered her self-possession. She felt, indeed, that she had at least equity on her side; and although hers was a difficult path to tread, still it must be pursued with firmness.

Her love for Herbert, sprang from the purest source. Mrs. Stewart even could not condemn it. True it was that he was poor; but did not that render him more dear to her generous heart. To enrich him with her abundant wealth was the cherished wish of her young heart. In every other respect how truly worthy was he of her! indeed, when she thought of his many virtues, she felt sincerely that in marrying Herbert it would be herself who was the favored person.

These reflections soon dried her tears: her proper pride and natural strength of mind returned; and she felt prepared to meet again the haughty eye of her aunt. She also remembered the Duke's promise that she should meet some one who was to make to her the interesting disclosure concerning the present retreat of the Cecil family.

Her heart now glowed with anticipated happiness; and by the time she had completed her toilette, her usually pale countenance was suffused with a bright flush; and as Mrs. Stewart kissed her cheek, when she came to say "good night," her fond friend held her from her for a moment, contemplating with

gratified affection the unusual loveliness of her appearance.

"A springy motion in her gait,
A rising step, did indicate
Of pride and joy no common rate,
That flushed her spirit.

I know not by what name beside
I shall it call;—if 'twas no pride,
It was a joy to that allied,
She did inherit."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"What though our love was never told,
Or breathed in sighs alone;
By signs that would not be controll'd,
Its growing strength was shown;
The touch, that thrill'd us with delight—
The glance—by art untam'd;
In one short hour, as brief as bright,
That tender truth proclaim'd."

BLANCHE was agreeably surprised on joining her aunt, to find that the clouds with which she had left her were all dispersed. Her stormy countenance was now serene, and she was all smiles and condescension. This was most unlooked for; but truly welcome to the heart of poor Blanche; which beat quickly in alarm when she found herself alone in the carriage with one she feared so much.

There was a spirit of haughtiness which so generally blended itself in every action of Lady Clairville, that it could not but alienate the affections of her niece; and, indeed, of all those who came under the influence of her power. No sympathy had she ever evinced in any of the feelings of her niece; no tenderness had ever existed in their intercourse; can it then be wondered at that Blanche, notwithstanding the natural warmth of her feelings, experienced no affection towards this her almost nearest relative,—the one who ought to have commanded the love which a mother's care would have elicited?

Lady Clairville, on hearing the confession of Blanche, had given way to a paroxysm of anger which was indeed fearful from its violence. Her first resolve was the determination of using every degree of severity towards her niece, by way of revenging herself upon the presumptuous girl who had dared to oppose her. And this was easy to execute, by using to its fullest extent the authority which she had in her power, as her guardian, to exert over her.

However, as the first tumult of rage subsided, she began to reflect upon the cool determined manner of Blanche; and recollecting that her disposition, though amiable and confiding, was tinctured with much firmness, which had more than once evinced itself, she paused to reflect which course would be most judicious to pursue in order to win her to her wishes. Abandon her darling long-cherished scheme she would not; she could not. She thought over and over again of part of the conversation; and, for the moment, debated within herself whether it might not be pique or jealousy that at present influenced Blanche. She had said, "Was it possible for her to love Julian, knowing that his heart was given to another?" and the mother denounced him as a headstrong and infatuated boy, thus to have destroyed his future prospects by his madness, and the folly which led him to prefer a penniless girl to one whose rank and immense wealth were not her sole attractions. Her thoughts then turned towards Lady Florence. She saw plainly that Blanche's

eyes were open to all that was going forward there; but she was disgusted with the character of the woman into whose hands he had fallen; and that while her clear conception at once penetrated into some of the shallow depths of his character, he was sinking in her esteem, as well as losing all hope of ever possessing her love.

The ungovernable and imperious woman, as she paced with disturbed steps the spacious apartment, even stamped with impotent rage as these distracting thoughts crowded upon her imagination; she saw the end of all her hopes and schemes, while images of fearful import forced themselves before her mental vision. Her son, the only object on earth for whom she felt anything approaching to a tender interest, she now saw in prospect a miserable, degraded being—lost to himself and to society—fettered by a woman who had sacrificed for him her station—her family—her virtue. For the first time, the truth touched upon by the words of Blanche, rushed before her eyes in all its frightful nakedness; and she could not disguise from herself that Julian was entangled in a destructive snare which her own hands had assisted in laying for him. She hoped it was not too late to avert the threatened mischief; but the terrible fact struck upon her heart, that the impropriety to which she had turned a deaf ear, and an averted eye, whilst hoping that it would produce forgetfulness on Julian's part towards Evelyn, now appeared to her terrified and awakened mind fraught with every danger, if not utter ruin.

She now believed it was this which had alienated Blanche. This must be all set to rights; Julian must be brought back to his home. "But will he come at my bidding?" exclaimed the now miserable mother; "and it is I who have done all this: it is I who have been the instrument of my child's destruction!" and bitter were the feelings which now pressed upon her tortured bosom. It was the first time this proud spirit had quailed, and fierce was the convulsion which shook her whole frame. But thus it is; whoever departs far from the plain track of virtuous and reasonable conduct, must undergo the evil consequences. The sober and serious hour must sooner or later arrive; and even should sin bring none of God's temporal punishments on the sinner's head, still will the voice of conscience, "which brings to remembrance evil thoughts and deeds, proclaim aloud," "God will bring every work unto judgment." Hence the haggard look and the restless couch—days never free from bitterness, and nights given up to remorse.

Recovering at length from the frenzied agitation to which her reflections had given rise, Lady Clairville sat down to compose her thoughts, and to ruminate upon the best means of averting the impending destruction to all her views and wishes. No time was to be lost; the result of her meditations was, the intention to soothe and conciliate Blanche by every means in her power; and to draw Julian away as speedily as possible from the circle of the enchantments of one who knew too well the use of them.

Lady Clairville's carriage soon whirled herself and niece to the door of Strathhaven House, and the rapidity of its progress took away from the unpleasantness of a *tele a tele*; in truth, Blanche's ideas were too fully occupied to make her feel silence an embarrassment; and her heart beat high as she found herself continually reverting to the Duke's words,

"You shall meet some one who will tell you all about the Cecils."

With much anxious expectation, she followed her aunt up the spacious staircase and entered the drawing-room. The Duke advanced to receive them. Blanche's eye ran hastily over the party that was there assembled, and perceiving only an old maiden aunt of the Duke's, who was well known to her, and several gentlemen who were strangers, a feeling of disappointment oppressed her heart; she thought none there were likely to be bearers of good tidings. Suddenly, her ears were caught by the sound of young and merry voices, which issued from an adjoining room; and remembering that Edwin had told her that his little sisters were inmates of the Duke's house, she eagerly looked towards the apartment, and half rose from the seat she had taken in order to enter it. The Duke, whose eye was intently watching her, saw in an instant her wishes; and, going towards her, said, "Lady de Cressy, will you allow me to lead you to some friends who are all impatient to see you?" Blanche joyfully obeyed his invitation, and accompanied him into the next room.

The first object she beheld, seated in a fauteuil, with one of her little cousins standing by her knee, was her aged and venerated grandmother. She could scarcely believe the reality of the joyous vision; yet, indeed, it was her. There was the slender drooping form—the beautiful mild countenance—the silver hair parted on a brow, whose heavenly serenity told of the spirit within. It was, indeed, her idolized relation; and, springing at once towards her, she was in a minute before her, on her knees, kissing with reverential love the feeble hands which sought to raise her to her bosom, where she was, the next instant, clasped, with the same warmth of affection which beat in her own heart. "Dearest mother!"—"My beloved child!"—were the only words which were uttered, until Blanche, looking up to express to the Duke the happiness she experienced, her eye rested upon another object. Her whole being seemed to feel his presence—it was Herbert Cecil.

Before this last separation, the cousins had always met with the same affectionate embrace which marks the greeting of brothers and sisters. Absence had not chilled their feelings; it had taught each one to love the other more truly, more fervently; still Blanche only gave her hand, which Herbert ventured not to detain beyond the moment he would have held that of the most indifferent; and yet that very moment revealed to both the passionate tenderness beating within each other's bosom.

Who could paint the beaming countenance, the eyes which, though half-filled with tears, sparkled with the bright flash of reciprocal, and felt to be reciprocal passion: the half-opened lips, which, murmuring words of gentle welcome, spoke more by tone than by expression, of the intense love which, though long an inhabitant of their hearts, seemed now at once, and for the first time, to be confided to each other's keeping.

It is a touching and beautiful sight to behold the pure love of an innocent girl, and the ardent, yet timid passion, which glows in every look and gesture of her lover. The Duke felt this as he witnessed the blissful interview; and, though apparently occupied with Mrs. Cecil, was looking on with a swelling heart. They were well paired, in parity of age

and attractions." "Youth, loving youth!" he sighed; heavily and bitterly he sighed; and, turning from the scene, he joined Lady Clairville.

He felt that some diplomacy was requisite to instruct her in the fact, that Mrs. Cecil and her grandchildren were at present his visitors, without giving offence by the tardy disclosure. It seemed the latter particular failed in attracting her attention; the knowledge of their vicinity was all which struck her; and looking unutterably surprised, she exclaimed, "The Cecils here! I did not know your Grace was acquainted with them!" and as she took his arm, that he might conduct her to greet her mother, a shade passed over her before smiling countenance.

The meeting was cold and formal between the mother and the courtly daughter. Thus it had ever been; for they were beings of so distinct an order, cordiality was an impossibility.

Lady Clairville was then informed of the return of Captain Cecil to England.

"It is very extraordinary," she said haughtily, "that he should not have thought fit to give me notice of the circumstance;" hoping sincerely, at the same time, that the Duke was not aware of Captain Cecil's reasons for not appearing before her. She then added, turning to the Duke, "pray, where are they? for the family have hid themselves in a most absurd and unaccountable manner from their nearest relatives; to strangers they appear to have been more accessible."

"I trust," replied the Duke calmly, "that they will soon be again at Riversdale. I have great hopes that Captain Cecil will be appointed to a very good command. Mr. Herbert Cecil's commission in the Coldstream Guards was signed this morning."

At this moment dinner was announced, and Blanche advanced from the sofa where she had been conversing with her young cousins, hanging upon the arm of Herbert. The Duke gave his to Lady Clairville; Mrs. Cecil not intending to leave the drawing-rooms. Lady Clairville was evidently confused at seeing her nephew; but taking her tone from that of her noble host, she accosted him with cordiality.

Fierce was the struggle in the mind of Herbert to accept with any degree of corresponding civility the offered hand. He thought of all her unfeeling conduct towards his parents. He remembered his father's exile—the consequent wretchedness and illness of his mother—the forlorn, unprotected state of his sister; however he combated against the choking sensation which he felt on replying to her smooth and deceitful words of kindness, and the meeting went off better than could be expected.

Every minute during dinner was marked by happiness to the two cousins. Much was said on both sides much told, much asked, particularly by Blanche. Nothing was either seen or heard by them, and they were, for the time, alive only to each other's presence, to the total oblivion of those surrounding them. Blanche little heeded the eyes of her aunt, which were fixed upon them with a degree of scrutiny which at another time might have disquieted her. What was it to her if lightning flashed from those fierce orbs? She felt that her protector, the sole object of her bosom's love, was

by her side; and at this moment, as she looked upon the manly beauty of Herbert, glowing with all the ardor of young and virtuous love, she thought she could bear any persecutions for the sake of one so justly dear to her.

Herbert had heard from the Duke of all the generous kindness of Blanche, and her munificent assistance. He had indeed learned from him much more; and his heart, which had long cherished a feeling it had been his painful study wholly to check and destroy, now gave free vent to all its smothered love. His deep sense of her goodness increased to a ten-fold degree his attachment. He looked upon her with respect as well as admiration; and exalted her in his imagination as a being little less than angelic.

Every hour, happy or sorrowful, must have its termination;—far too rapidly did those arrive to their conclusion which had thus reunited Blanche and Herbert. However, before they parted many happy plans were made for the future, and an early visit of Blanche to poor Evelyn, who still watched over her mother's couch with anxious care, was arranged.

The dinner at Strathaven House, which had afforded so much pleasure to the young Baroness, was productive of very different feelings in the bosom of her aunt. Everything, to her, appeared untoward. Her brother in England, evidently protected in the most extraordinary manner by the Duke, was a deadly annoyance. Of course she must now make advances towards him, or she would be exposed in the eyes of the Duke; the man of all others, from his power and distinction, she wished most to conciliate. This must bring Evelyn again into the society of Julian; and to crown all her discomfort, though she could scarcely believe the evidence of her own eyes, there seemed more between Blanche and Herbert than the quiet and rather reserved affection which she had formerly observed. There was perceptibly an understanding between them; and could it be possible that the proud pauper thought to snatch the precious prize from Julian?

Lady Clairville's very soul was shaken with a storm of passion; wrath, pride, and the desire of revenge rose simultaneously in her breast; and it was with difficulty she restrained herself whilst the eyes of others were upon her. But as soon as she had gained the privacy of her own apartment, then did she give way to the pent-up agony of her mind.

How unsuitable is that engrossing anxiety and overwhelming concern, for one particular object, which by its nature must be independent of direction or dominion!

Lady Clairville had staked all her hopes upon the union of her son with the wealthiest and most distinguished heiress in the kingdom; and the matter, from forming the one subject of her thoughts, had assumed a consequence which it is difficult to believe the actions of another could carry with them. But so it was; and now that everything threatened the overthrow of her plans, Lady Clairville experienced as much misery as if actual misfortune had reached her. For success she would have forfeited every other hope and privilege; not thinking that the time must come, whether prefaced by triumph or disappointment, when all earthly things will be as bitterness and wormwood which have driven our minds from that heaven, where pride, contention, and deceit can never enter.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

"I do not love thee!—yet thy speaking eyes,
With their deep, bright, and most expressive blue—
Between me and the midnight heaven arise,
Often than any eyes I ever knew."

"How can I ever repay you, dearest Lady Florence, for all this tender care?" said Julian Sinclair, in a low subdued tone of voice, to his lovely nurse, who had just arranged the pillows beneath his head, as he lay pale and attenuated on a couch. "I find it even difficult to express to you all the grateful affection which your kind solicitude awakens in my heart," he added, endeavoring to kiss the fairy hand which rested on his couch. "After all, words give very little expression to feelings."

"Hush! hush! babbler: do you forget that silence is so peremptorily ordered by your doctors," Lady Florence replied, playfully placing her hand upon his lips. "If you rebel, I will leave you to the care of Eugenie; and you must then talk of blond laces, or of silk brocades, if you wish to be listened to. But do, dear Julian, be tranquil, you look so well to-day. I wish Lady Clairville to see you as free from fever and suffering as you are now. She will be here in half an hour, and you know how little upsets you."

Julian certainly did look well. Though his hair had been all removed, the black velvet cap he wore rather added to than injured the beautiful contour of his face and well-formed features, while the pallid hue of his complexion made his appearance strikingly interesting.

Lady Florence, whose eyes had been long fixed upon him with tender and admiring love, as she sat on a low ottoman by his side, now resumed her embroidery frame, and frowning with all the power of her fair open brow at any further attempts at conversation made by the invalid, she was soon apparently intent on the violet, her snowy fingers were tracing.

She looked also pale; but it arose from constant watchings, combined with the fever of excitement burning within her bosom. Her every hour had been busied in the task of tending the invalid, while her whole heart was wrapped up in the anxiety and delight of an occupation, which placed her, as it were, in the tenderest affinity with one upon whom she so madly doted.

Julian's accident had been one of a most frightful nature. The concussion on the brain was violent, and many a long day of suffering had he passed. During his period none of his friends had access to his couch, except Lady Florence and his mother. In vain had poor Blanche pleaded for admission, urging her anxiety and sisterly affection. Lady Florence had remonstrated most seriously with Lady Clairville, on the further excitement the meeting might give to his nervous system, and she left her son without apprehension to the sole society of one, from whom nothing but destruction could ensue.

To Lady Florence, this time of danger and distress had its charms; thought at times her soul sickened with her fears of its result, and the slight hopes at first given of Julian's recovery. She was naturally affectionate, and had a heart beating with warm and tender feelings. These, up to the present time, had only been called forth by her beautiful boys. But though she idolized them with all a mother's devotion, the world and its vanities had ever offered a powerful and preponderating interest. Now, she who had hitherto felt no pleasure but in glare and

gaiety, would sit whole hours in the darkened room, with no other companion than her thoughts—no other occupation than watching every variation of countenance of the unconscious youth, who lay stunned and powerless from the effects of the accident which had brought him thither.

Such is the nature of woman, such her devotion and tenderness: and how lovely would these feelings be, were they not so often polluted by the inroads of passion, and corroded by the impulses of a frail nature, which transforms virtue into vice!

And where was the husband all this time? Quite at his ease in the country; shooting, feasting, looking forward to the hunting season, and wondering what could possess his wife to remain so long in town, at a time when everything decent must be out of it. He could not believe she would have the folly, because a sick man was brought to the house, to stay there to do the honors; but really he had too much to do to be able to waste his time by going up to London to look after her. His hunting stables were to be put in order, besides a variety of other important matters to be arranged; and though it was a consummate bore to be married to a woman who did not like the country, and look a little more after her boys, it was but right everybody should amuse themselves in their own way. Thus it was, that Lady Florence was left in undisturbed tranquillity, with nothing to interfere with her present occupations, which, in spite of the dismal sick-room, the stealthy foot-step, and midnight watchings, were bliss extreme in comparison to the heartless state of indifference which she dragged on at her own splendid home in the country.

Ill-fated and improper as was her attachment, unfortunately it existed with an intensity which defied all change; was fatal to her peace of mind; and threatened the direst consequences. To the voice of conscience she lent a deaf ear; and reckless of result, she hugged the alluring sin to her bosom. But even now she paid the penalty of her criminal weakness, and saw with terror the ruin and devastation which it must bring upon herself, and upon him whom she loved better than self. The passions are like the stream when swollen by the mountain torrent, and ruffled by the winds. The barriers which before have stood its force are beaten down, and it carries destruction on all around.

They whose winds are by nature and principle happily tranquil, or whose situation in life removes them far from the contagion and examples of tumultuous passion, can hardly conceive that, with everything to make this life happy, there are those, who possess that within their minds which obscures the brightest felicity and inflicts the keenest woe. It was thus with the unfortunate Florence; though surrounded by the pleasures of opulence and distinction; possessing youth and friends, still the plague-spot of illicit love was on her soul, teaching her to forget her duty towards God and man, and filling her mind at once with the inquietudes of lawless passion, and the agonizing pangs of remorse. The Almighty need not "come out of his secret place" in order to bring the sinner to punishment. He need not call thunder down from heaven, or raise any minister of wrath from the abyss below; he need only say, "Let him alone," and at that moment the unfortunate becomes his own tormentor; the fire begins of itself to kindle within him, the worm that never dies seizes on his heart.

"Sweet Florence!" said Julian, after having to the best of his power kept silence for a quarter of an hour, while his eyes were fixed on the lovely form beside him, occupied in tracing the graceful contours of her head and neck as she bent over her embroidery-frame;—"Sweet Florence!" he again repeated, "it seems to me that through all my delirium, all the stupor, which so affrights you, I still have been conscious of your presence,—still been sensible that some bright and beautiful spirit has been hovering near me; but yet I have not always felt distinctly that it was you, fair lady, with those pretty curls; sometimes it appeared to me that it was my poor Evelyn; so tenderly watching over me. I have seen her often in my dreams since I was ill; and I have a confused notion of having seen her before my fall; but my brain is still too weak for me to put any two ideas together with a degree of certainty. Besides, the likeness you bear her, may very well cause me to mingle your images together in my heart."

Julian was silent for a few moments, endeavoring to gain some recollection of the events which had occurred immediately before his fall, when a convulsive sob from his companion caused him to turn quickly towards her. He then saw to his astonishment and sorrow, that she was weeping bitterly; for, although her face was buried in her hands, still her heaving bosom, and the tears which trickled through her slender fingers, betrayed all her emotion.

"Florence! dearest Florence! why do you weep?" cried Julian, raising himself, and endeavoring to take one of the hands which concealed her face. The sobs of Florence only increased; but, at length rising suddenly, she cast herself on her knees before him, and still weeping, she faltered out in broken accents, "Julian, you will break my heart, if you mention any name but mine, just now. Cruel, ungrateful Julian! I have watched by you night and day—in fear and trembling, I have waited by your side to listen to every breath you drew—I have bestowed upon you my every thought—my every feeling, and now you almost tell me you have only prized the care, from associating with me the image, of another!—a passionless girl, who probably never bestowed a thought upon you."

She was for some minutes silent, and choking—stifling sobs told of the violence of the passions working within. At length looking up, and perceiving that Julian was in a fearful state of agitation, her feelings appeared to take another color, and clasping his hand within her own, she exclaimed, "Forgive me, dearest—forgive the vehemence of one whose love for you leads her to these painful reproaches. O Julian! tell me that you pardon me—tell me that you feel some affection for one who idolizes the very air you breathe. Julian! dearest Julian! love me—love your poor broken-hearted Florence. Tell me that you will think only of me for one brief fortnight, and then, perhaps, you will be torn from me for ever. But till the sad hour of your departure, let me be all to you; for the few fleeting days before that dreadful moment arrives, let me be happy by feeling that I am your only thought!"

Who could resist so passionate an appeal, from one whose loveliness was only still more dangerous at this moment of her sorrow and her love? Who could resist the fascinations of so beautiful a being, who, now on her knees before him, breathing the warmest expressions of tenderness, was only openly avowing what her every act, her every look, had

told before. Those looks and those acts had also done their work, and the heart—the sensations of Julian had all been undermined before this direct claim upon the reciprocity of his feelings. It was a fearful moment for a man of unstable principles and impetuous passions: it was a moment of doubt and agony. Chained, as it were, to the peril which menaced him, by the ties of gratitude, by sickness and the influence her blandishments held over his spirit, all that there was to enable him to resist the cup of temptation now held to his lips was his already weakened love for Evelyn Cecil, and the dictates of virtue and of honor. He could no longer conceal from himself the situation in which he stood; he could no longer halt between the intoxicating infatuation which gilded every moment with unhalloved interest, and the conduct which reason called upon him to pursue. The choice was now to be made. He must at once tear himself from the tender exquisite creature, who at this very moment seemed conscious her bliss or misery was to be decided, or he must at once declare himself, *and be her lover*. The choice was made; and the next minute the devoted Florence was weeping on his bosom tears of rapturous delight.

She spoke of love no more that day; but it emanated from her bright eye-beams, the silvery sweetness of her voice, and the thousand tendernesses shown by every word and action. Subtle and irresistible was its effect on the surrendered heart of Julian. The hour of resistance passed, he now yielded himself unscrupulously to all the dangerous delights of his position, and in one day became more perfectly—more devotedly the slave of the enamored woman who had won him, than during all the previous term in which she had exercised her seductions. By degrees the image of Evelyn became fainter, until it totally vanished from his view; and in her pure stead reigned the beautiful—the voluptuous Lady Florence.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"O sir, you are old;
Nature in you stands on the very verge
Of her confine; you should be ruled and led
By some discretion, that discerns your state
Better than you yourself."

It is with sorrow and reluctance that, by the course of the narrative, we are obliged to linger amid scenes where vice had mingled its bewitching and baneful influence with the most exquisite beauty and refinement,—thus gaining a double ascendancy over the mind of one who, though gifted with good and excellent qualities, from an impetuous disposition and unstable principles, was, unfortunately, but too open to the inroads of temptation.

It was a period of guilty happiness to Lady Florence, whilst she thus held in thralldom one whom she loved with all the violence of ungoverned passion; and thus loving with fearful desperation, shut her eyes to all the crime and peril of her situation.

Day after day passed on, and Julian, though still languid, and at times suffering from his accident, found each succeeding hour more interesting than the last; while his passion for the seductive Florence gained strength by indulgence.

Since the moment when the mention of Evelyn's name had called forth so tender a burst of passion and of grief, it had never passed his lips; but from the period when her pure image was banished from his mind, that mind had so fallen from its high

estate of honor and virtue, that now to have mentioned it would have been in a measure polluting the former object of his heart's idolatry.

The morning after the dinner at the Duke of Strathhaven's spoken of in a preceding chapter, Julian was, as usual, *tele-a-tele* with his enchanting hostess, feasting his eyes upon her glowing loveliness, and drinking large and intoxicating draughts of passion while he gazed.

He was almost entirely recruited in health, though quiet and abstinence were still strictly prescribed; and he knew full well that the hour was fast approaching, or indeed had arrived, when he ought to tear himself away from the growing delights of his present position.

But how was it to be done? How could he summon resolution to do that, which would be a frightful struggle to his own feelings, and to the devoted being to whom he owed so deep a debt of gratitude.

Lord Bacon says, "affection beholdeth merely the present; reason beholdeth the future and sum of time." Julian and Florence had, indeed, only lived for the present; and while wandering in a flowery labyrinth, with eyes closed to the termination of the vista which bounded its prospect—forgetting alike the reckoning future time would call for, and the certainty of the coming of that time—they had given themselves up to the delightful delirium of each passing hour. Still there were moments, calm, solitary moments—before the excitement of the day had commenced, or when tired, even in spite of the wit, the beauty, the love of Lady Florence—he sank on his bed, too much moved with the restless anxiety of passion even for sleep, that Julian remembered that this state of existence must not last for ever, fraught as it was with ruin to them both, particularly to her whose welfare he was bound to cherish with the tenderest care.

These thoughts, on the morning of which we are speaking, again partially reverted to his mind, during the absence of Lady Florence, who had gone to join a visitor in another apartment. Whilst he was revolving in his mind the necessity of quitting Belgrave Square, and the possibility there would still remain of his constantly seeing the arbitress of his time and of his pleasures, Lady Clairville was announced.

Julian saw, in a moment, that her brow was more than usually stern; she looked pale, and her countenance was overcast with gloom. He knew that something more than ordinary had disturbed her, and waited in silence for the outburst of the storm which he saw was impending.

Lady Clairville threw herself upon a chair, and sat for some moments without speaking. At length she said in a harsh, discordant tone of voice—

"Julian, is it your intention to live for ever with Lady Florence? To tell you the truth, your remaining here, now that you are able to be removed, savors of the most glaring impropriety. I must therefore desire that you will return to Grosvenor Square; your long stay here has already injured your interests in many ways."

This speech at once performed its work. Julian, who a few minutes before had felt, in spite of self-delusion and intoxicated feelings, the necessity of the step which his mother now so imperatively enforced, from a spirit of opposition brought on by her injudicious and haughty mode of proposing it, determined on this point to show how little he was to be

dictated to. He, however, made no reply, feeling too angry to speak with any degree of coolness upon the subject. Meeting no answer, Lady Clairville continued, "I shall consult Dr. B——, who is also attending your father; and if he consents, I shall send the carriage for you to-morrow morning."

"Pray do not trouble yourself to do so," Julian replied, his face crimson with anger. "My plans are very differently arranged; when I leave this place, I am going into the country. I have not the slightest intention of returning to Grosvenor Square."

"And where are you going?" inquired Lady Clairville, seeking to imitate his coolness. "I may at least, claim that explanation."

"I have not quite determined."

"Very well, take your own wilful way. My determination is also made, by seeing how little equal you are to the regulation of your own conduct. Your future dependence on me will teach you what it is to brave my will; I shall go this very moment, and induce your father to sign a will, which has some time been drawn up, and that will make you regret having cast from you the hand and affections, of the wealthy Blanche de Cressy. You have been an ungrateful and undutiful son, endeavoring in everything to thwart my wishes, and oppose my anxious solicitude for your advancement. However, go your own way; if destruction awaits you from your unprincipled conduct, the curse is drawn by yourself upon your guilty and adulterous head."

With these words of violence, Lady Clairville left her son. Rage swelled within her bosom, which was torn by thoughts of bitterness and revenge. "Home," she exclaimed in a stern voice to her servants; and to her home she returned, with the fixed resolve to be the ruin of her own son.

Amidst the vicissitudes of human life, who has any title to reckon on the future? The course of worldly events never stands still for any length of time. It is by no means a fixed and steady object, like the mountain or the rock, which is always to be found in the same situation. It is a river continually flowing—not the still smooth stream which glides along with one constant tenor; but a river, which, for a time, may hold a regular course within its banks, till being interrupted by rocks, it foams into a torrent; or, swollen by tributary currents, it lays waste the neighboring plains.

On entering her home, Lady Clairville inquired whether her niece had gone out for her morning airing, and was informed that the Baroness had not yet left the apartment of Lord Clairville. It was the daily practice of Blanche to spend some hours with the poor invalid; and there, while contemplating the owner of wealth and power, old, infirm, and shaking with the palsy of disease, she could see the practical example of the inadequate nature of all earthly gifts. The frame of Lord Clairville was exceedingly bent, and old age was rendered more striking in his appearance by the ravages which ill-health had made upon it. He was half reclining upon a couch when joined by Blanche on the present occasion, and she hastened anxiously to his side, rather struck by the more than ordinary sickness of his appearance. She assisted the nurse to help him to his dinner; and so trembling was his hand, so perfectly powerless, she was obliged to feed him almost as a child; which the poor old man said, "no one did so well, so kindly, as his pretty Blanche."

There was much mildness and amiability in the nature of the sufferer, and kindly and gratefully he looked upon his fair niece, saying every minute, "Thank you, dear child, for your kindness to your poor uncle. He will not trouble you long, good Blanche."

The dinner was at length over. It was swallowed with even less appetite than usual. His niece arranged the cushions of his couch more comfortably for the invalid, hoping that he would now take a little sleep according to his usual custom. This was done, and she was about to leave the room when he looked imploringly at her, as he said, "Don't leave me yet, dear Blanche."

"No, certainly, dear uncle, I will not," replied the affectionate girl; and kneeling by his side, she looked kindly in his face and kissed the shaking hand which was put out tremblingly to pat her cheek.

"O darling!" he said, "you do love your poor uncle; therefore you must also love Julian."

"I do love him, truly and affectionately," she said.

"Then what is it that Lady Clairville was telling me this morning? She made me very uncomfortable, very nervous. You saw that I had no appetite. I hardly could understand what she meant, she confused me so by talking so loud, and looking so angry; but it was something about Herbert Cecil, and your not going to marry Julian. You know, Blanche, how we wish it; and then you will still be with us."

"O uncle, dear uncle," replied Lady de Cressy, wishing to calm his mind, "pray do not agitate yourself by talking so much, particularly now, when you ought to sleep. You know that I am your own affectionate child, and ever shall be your nurse. Blanche will never desert her charge. "But," added she coaxingly, "do not talk of marriage. Julian is too young—too giddy. Why it is but the other day that he was a boy coming home from school. Do you remember, uncle, our going to see him at the Eton Montem, in his fine Spanish dress, when you said he looked like a dancing dog?"

The poor old man, half childish, laughed heartily; and soon falling into another train of ideas, as was the wish of Blanche, he chatted for some time cheerfully, reviving old stories, of which his dear Julian was the hero. At length the recollection of his agitating conversation in the morning, with his imperious wife, again crossed his weakened mind, and he said with a deep sigh, "Well, for my part, I would not force you, pretty dear, to do anything you do not like; and after all, there is not always happiness in matrimony. But your aunt frightens me, worries me; and you cannot imagine," he added, looking nervously around him, "how she makes me tremble when she comes into the room. Lately," and here he almost whispered the words, "she has hinted at subjects which distress me. She tells me that Julian is not fit to be trusted to take care of his fortune when I die; and that I must make a will to tie it up so that he shall not have the free disposal of it. But I think I ought not to do that. All the Lord Clairvilles for years past have inherited the property without any legal restrictions. I won't do it. I can't do it."

Blanche felt her heart beat high with indignation and sorrow; anger against her aunt for her unprincipled conduct, and true sympathy for the annoyance and grief which she caused her gentle and almost

dying husband. She knew not what to say, or how to advise a person who was almost in a state of second childhood; but seeing how peculiarly his nerves were shaken this day, she besought him to dismiss the subject from his mind, nor think of acting until he better knew the nature of Julian's folly alleged by his mother, and the measures she wished to be taken.

Her kind and soothing manner composed him; and at last he consented to her entreaties and endeavoured to tranquillize himself for sleep. After having darkened the room, Blanche settled the cushions of his sofa; and promising to remain with him, she seated herself on an ottoman by his side, holding his trembling meagre hand, clasped within her own so soft and fair. He had almost sunk into a gentle slumber when the door was hastily thrown open, and Lady Clairville walked haughtily into the room, her brow dark with passion and gloomy resolution.

"My uncle is just going to sleep," said Blanche almost sternly, for she was disgusted with her unfeeling and noisy manner, and little dreamt of the storm within which lent such violence to her actions.

"Well!" the desperate woman replied, "I cannot help it. I have business of the utmost consequence to transact with him. My dear lord," she added, endeavoring to soften her voice and manner as she turned to the poor old man, who with a scared and fearful glance looked round upon her,—"my dear lord, I am sorry to disturb you, but I must have a little conversation with you."

"O my dear," he replied in a feeble supplicating voice, "I am not well; cannot you delay it until to-morrow?"

"To-morrow!" she repeated in a voice of scorn. "It is presumptuous in *any* one to defer important business in the expectation of to-morrow! Blanche," said she, casting a withering glance of anger upon her indignant niece, "I have important subjects to discuss with Lord Clairville."

"Are you going, my dear?" inquired her poor uncle as she rose from the seat she had taken, grieved to see that he was almost weeping with nervousness,—*"are you going to leave me?"* Kiss me, my Blanche, kiss me," and the unfortunate old man clung to her with such childish and confiding eagerness, that Blanche's warm heart ached with pity for him while she shuddered with disgust at the conduct of his unnatural life.

"Upon my word, quite a scene!" exclaimed Lady Clairville with a disdainful laugh, as Blanche left the room with a flushed cheek and eyes full of tears. Then turning to her husband, she added, "my dear lord, I am not going to eat you up; pray do not agitate yourself." Lady Clairville now wished indeed to soothe him; for she saw with alarm that his fragile frame shook more than ever, and that his pale cheek became almost livid. She began to wish that she had been less abrupt and harsh in her manner; still these indications of weakness in the suffering invalid only urged the bad spirit within her to greater promptitude in the completion of her base purpose, ere it was too late. She took the seat which Blanche had quitted, and in the mildest voice, which at that moment of anxiety and stormy agitation she could assume, said, "There is no cause to be alarmed, my dear lord; I am come merely to request your signature to a paper which I have caused to be drawn up. Your love for our beloved boy is so great, that I am sure you are willing and ready

to do anything that is to tend to his ultimate good. Now I am convinced, from reasons which I will not distress you by mentioning, that should he come soon,—which heaven forbid, my dear lord!—into the unbounded possession of his fortune, that ruin would immediately ensue. I have had a will framed in which there are some few restrictions, and which by your signing will constitute some sort of safeguard to our precious son. It will make me, my dear husband, a person of more responsibility and influence, in the event of my having the misfortune to lose you, and being left his sole guardian. Mr. Elwes, our lawyer, is fortunately at this moment in the house; and Chambers and Dickson would serve for witnesses. It will not take you a moment to sign your name, after Mr. Elwes has just run over the paper to you, and then all will be well.”

Lady Clairville did not wait for an answer; but going herself to a door which opened into an adjoining room, she was immediately joined by the three persons she had mentioned, who had been apparently waiting for her summons. Mr. Elwes bore in his hand a parchment; and Chambers, the house steward, followed, carrying an inkstand and pens.

The sofa upon which Lord Clairville was lying, was so placed that his back was turned to the party who now entered his apartment, so that they could not be seen, or see his countenance until they had approached close to him: therefore, when Lady Clairville advanced to his side to assist him to sit up that he might perform her bidding and sign the ruin of her son, her violent start and the piercing scream which broke from her lips were for the moment inexplicable to the lawyer and astonished servants. The next instant, however, all was understood; and in the distorted features of the dying man, they witnessed the overthrow of the schemes to which their obedience to Lady Clairville had made them accessory. The poor old lord had been seized with another and a fatal stroke of palsy; and although for some hours he still breathed, his death warrant was passed, and he was soon released from the agitating turmoils and sufferings of this life.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

“But when that flame has blazed into
A being and a power,
And smiled in scorn upon the dew
That fell in its first warm hour,
’Tis the flame that curls round the martyr’s head,
Whose task is to destroy;
’Tis the lamp on the altars of the dead,
Whose light is not of joy.”

A few brief hours had worked much change in the worldly position of Julian Sinclair. From partial dependence on the will of an imperious and scheming mother, he at once became, by the death of Lord Clairville, his own master—the possessor of rank, riches, and elevated station in the world—with all the subordinate advantages such possessions command.

Lady Clairville saw with feelings of indescribable bitterness, rendered still more galling by the secret consciousness that she had in a measure hastened the catastrophe, that Julian was no longer in her power. A splendid jointure was secured to her, and the house in Grosvenor Square was hers during her lifetime; but affluence placed against dominion, weighed but as a rose-leaf in the balance with this naughty woman. She was no longer supreme. Julian succeeded to the bulk of the Clairville posses-

sions, and being of age, was therefore perfectly independent. Thus the child of her love and her ambition—estranged by former opposition, stood aloof in the world, free and unfettered from any influence of hers—at perfect liberty to follow the bent of his own wayward inclinations.

And what were Julian’s feelings upon the occasion? His father’s death could only occasion transient sorrow; for his sufferings had made his life a burthen, and his death must appear to every one a timely release for him from pain and misery.

When the first gush of natural feeling had subsided, and the sorrow which, to a kind and affectionate heart, the death of friends or kindred must ever occasion, we might suppose that he would rejoice at the arrival of that moment to which his hopes had so long pointed—and avow openly the love which, in spite of a mother’s opposition, had so long ruled paramount in his bosom. This was the time for which he had so long panted—when he might without fear of concealment cast himself at the feet of that sweet Evelyn who had been once considered the bright star of his destiny—the time was come when he was free! And was he now happy in the idea of his freedom? Alas! No. The chains which, now shackled him, were more heavy than those of parental authority; and although he lacked the strength to break them, still at times they weighed heavily and painfully upon his heart.

With the moment to which he had once looked forward, with young love and ardent hopes, came the recollection of her for whom they had been formed. Evelyn stood before him in all the freshness of her exquisite and innocent beauty; and memory would also force upon his mind the time when he was happy through all his troubles, in being able to hope for the future. That happiness was now fled. There is no future for him. Confusion and misery were all that it presented. Could he desert the woman who had so repeatedly confessed to him that she could not exist without his love? Yet what would be the consequences of this infatuated passion? Ruin on every side. Still as he looked upon the beautiful Circe, as she sat weeping by his side, at the idea of merely losing his society for the brief space for which his presence was required upon the mournful occasion in Grosvenor Square—when he beheld her kneeling at his feet, imploring for the promise of his return—the new Lord Clairville found there were vexations in this life, for which wealth and power offered no remedy; and that in the passionate devotion of a young and lovely female there were annoyances of which his philosophy dreamt not.

What could he do? He felt the galling entanglement of his chains; but how was he to disentwine them? He felt already the sensations of a guilty creature; and found or fancied every eye looked cold upon him; yet still he returned to the thraldom which beauty and passion were weaving around him.

In the demeanor of his cousin Blanche he thought he discerned a marked change, and he shrunk from the idea of having any private conversation with her; however, this was an embarrassment from which he found it difficult to escape. His presence in Grosvenor Square was now frequently necessary; and he was therefore obliged to make it his ostensible abode, although his days were almost entirely passed with Lady Florence.

To her the death of Lord Clairville assumed the form of a great calamity, and her mind had been strangely disturbed by the occurrences of the last few days.

Whilst Julian was in a measure dependent upon the will of his haughty and ambitious mother, Lady Florence had felt that he was also much more in her power, and that the influence most inimical to her hopes, was subject also to Lady Clairville's counter-acting schemes. But now she was torn by anxious and jealous fears. She dreaded the dominion which she was certain the remembrance of Evelyn still retained over him; and with that exquisite tact which is the torment of true love, felt that the pure flame which had glowed in his heart towards her, was smothered,—not wholly extinguished. Now that he had the power of choosing his own fate, would he not return to a love which was so natural, so virtuous? The thought was agony; and the infatuated woman believed that thus, to lose him, would be to entail eternal misery upon herself. Reckless of consequences, blinded by the violence of her unlawful passion, she was ready to sacrifice every consideration for the continuance of those daily meetings so necessary to her sinful wishes. Her husband she had never loved; and owing to the absence of virtuous principle in her mind, and her knowledge of his phlegmatic and easy disposition, on his score she felt but little compunction at the conduct she was now pursuing, or the consequences to which it might lead. The idea of her children frequently occurred to her; and it never failed to inflict an agonizing pang to her bosom, keen as the dagger's stroke. When indulging in bewildering dreams of love and Julian in some remote corner of the globe, where all but virtue should administer to the bliss of each passing day—where no frowning brow should check the happiness which love, and wealth, and perfect freedom must give them—the remembrance of her beautiful boys would bid her pause, and feel with torturing certainty, that the moment which gave her wholly to Julian, must sever her eternally from her children. But the force of unrestrained passion is one which breaks down every barrier; even the most tender and natural affections are laid waste under its tainted influence. The evil feelings which arise from violent and unlawful love, never fail to darken and deprave the heart; and if we trace the effects of them throughout their course, we shall find that they gradually destroy all virtue and power of resistance, proving the ultimate ruin of the wretched being who has dared to war against the dictates of Heaven and his own conscience. Who can say that the end of that fearful career, which is marked with danger and with shame, is ever exempt from woe and wretchedness? who can say that the bitter pangs of remorse do not aggravate the misery of the unfortunate victim, adding self-reproach to the corroding anguish which the indulgence of vice infallibly inflicts? But though the voice of the sinful and the virtuous alike concur in proclaiming this truth, deaf to the warning, we still see numbers daily pursuing the road to sin and destruction with blind and headlong steps.

About three weeks after the death of Lord Clairville, Lady Florence received one morning a letter from her husband, which considerably added to the disquietude of her present feelings, and caused her most inexpressible anxiety.

Mr. St. John, in general, was most quiescent and

indulgent; but he now wrote in a decided, and almost peremptory manner; there was even a tone of anger throughout his letter. He desired that she would return to Marston without any delay, as he wished her to preside over a large party which he expected in a few days, amongst whom were some distinguished guests.

The period seemed now arrived when some decisive step must be taken, and everything appeared combined to hasten that measure which the guilty Florence had lately dared to contemplate; not without trembling, it is true, but yet with an ardent and anxious hope. Julian must be hers; and this she felt could not be wholly effected until she had made an extreme and total sacrifice on her part. Honor, husband, home, children, every other tie on earth must be quitted for him. He must feel that he had worked her ruin, ere her love could give her any hold upon him. This once brought to his perception, she would then have only to make him forget the position in which he stood, by the tenderest arts, and by that devotion of heart and soul which had led him to it.

With an intuitive apprehension of some of the peculiarities of Julian's character, Lady Florence had felt that she better extended her influence over him by preserving some personal respect; and though twining herself into his very being by the most winning endearments, the most passionate devotion, still with a delicacy and management worthy a better cause, she had maintained, as it were, a barrier of reserve between them. His increasing passion showed the judgment which had produced this result. But the force of outward circumstances now offered an interruption to a state of things which, with all its numberless anxieties, owned many charms in the eyes of the infatuated woman; and as they rested on the letter of her recall, she felt appalled by the consciousness that the moment for action—definite, decided action, was indeed arrived. Should she fail?—should the love which her every act had sought to implant in the bosom of Julian, still be insufficient to prompt him to show that contempt of all the prejudices of education and habit to which it must now be her task to urge him? Not by words and representations, but by crowding into one interview her utmost power of fascination, was the plan then to be pursued; and at the moment of highest excitement she would show to him the obligation of separation, or the happier alternative of indulged and unfettered passion, in some spot *where*, both unknown, they might live for themselves, and those enjoyments which their refined tastes, and the extensive means of the new Viscount, would insure them.

Once again the images of her children presented themselves to the mind of the desperate woman, and she gasped for very agony as she felt that she was even now contemplating as complete a separation from them as the dark grave could offer. Still the questions rose to her lips.—Could she quit Julian?—Could she resume the hateful duties of a wife to one she had already deeply injured, and from whom, she was consequently more than ever disposed to shrink? It was impossible; even were destruction to be hurled at once upon her guilty love—she could not cast it from her. A flood of passionate tears coursed each other down her cheeks, as this fearful conflict rose in her bosom, as she sank back on the couch upon which she was sitting, sobbing with uncontrollable emotion.

At this moment Julian entered the apartment earlier than he had taught her to expect him.

Her intention had been to receive him with smiles, and all the charms with which she knew so well how to delude his enamored heart. Her beauty was to be enhanced by dress—her graces, by the position she would take up in one of her voluptuous and exquisitely-arranged drawing-rooms. His very soul was to be taken captive by the combined enchantments of her wit and talents—music, conversation, and all the sweet *abandon* of one who loved, and who resolved to resign herself to the unhallowed passion.

Accident, however, did more to advance her cause than the most perfect system of coquetry; and Florence in her grief, heart-broken, weeping in the desolation of her spirit, pale and dishevelled in her solitary boudoir, was an object far more touching to the present feelings of Julian, than in the most brilliant and triumphant hour of her beauty.

At first he was greatly shocked and afflicted at the state in which he found her; but on learning how much he was implicated in this excess of sorrow, a thrill of pleasure passed through him, and he mingled his tears with hers.

Poor Julian! This was a fearful ordeal for him to encounter; and with our knowledge of his character, we may not wonder that he passed not through unscathed. Subdued by her tender trust in himself, urged by the violence of her grief—the distraction and misery of her every feeling—he offered her another home, and besought her to shelter herself even within his arms!

Having once allowed the impulses of a guilty nature to gain the ascendancy, he now threw himself into the very centre of the torrent, against which he had long, though faintly struggled. The impetuosity of the stream bore him along. He was not free—not even master of himself; and almost unconsciously, he was driven forward, tossed, agitated,—yet passive like a ship to the violence of the waves.

We will not dwell upon the particulars of this guilty scene; it is painful to trace the progress of vice and infatuation. Suffice it to say, that before they separated, every arrangement was made for the flight of Lady Florence with the weak and highly-criminal Julian.

Naples was fixed upon as the place of their ultimate destination: the spring was to find them in one of the marble palaces of Sorrento; and the summer was to be spent on the blue waters of the Mediterranean, gliding amidst the sunny islands of the Egean sea in a yacht which was to excel in splendor and luxury all the refined inventions of modern mariners.

Thus was a veil of delusive brightness thrown over the evil deeds about to be enacted; and Lady Florence retired to her pillow that night with some feelings of exultation, forgetting that at the moment she was virtually one amongst the most abject of her sex.

However, there was much perturbation and anxiety mingled with her sense of triumph; and the fanciful *pendule* on the mantle-piece had chimed the hour of four with its clear though dulcet bell, before her eyes were closed in sleep. And even then she could scarcely be said to repose; for her slumbers were disturbed by fearful visions, which, taking her back to early years, at one moment placed her in her father's castle in Ireland, with towers and walls tottering

around her, and paralyzed limbs which forbade her own escape; then again she seemed in the chapel where her nuptials with Mr. St. John had taken place; all was the same—her dress, her bridesmaids, all as she had seen them, with this fearful variation—a bleeding spectre persisted in standing in the place she ought to have taken at the altar. Awaking herself with shuddering terror from the sleep which conjured up such frightful images, Lady Florence was surprised to find her own maid standing beside her, partly dressed, but still in sufficient dishabille to show that her toilette had been most hastily performed.

A sickly sensation of alarm oppressed her as she looked for explanation into the face of consternation of her usually composed attendant. She then learned that a special messenger had just arrived from Leicestershire, with the intimation that her eldest boy, a child of six years, had been thrown from his pony, and was so dangerously injured that his life was in the most imminent peril.

What a reaction did this intelligence create in the bosom of Lady Florence! Her boy—her beautiful—her adored Harry, whom she doted upon with such tender pride, pronounced to be in a hopeless state! What a crowd of torturing reflections rushed upon her imagination. Had she not been in a measure instrumental to the calamity which now filled her bosom with terror and anxiety? Had she been where her awakened conscience told her she ought to have been—watching over her children—the accident might never have occurred; as she had forbidden his being again placed on the pony which had once before thrown him. She felt in the horror of her present reflections, that she was little less than the destroyer of her darling boy.

She had arisen immediately on reading the hurried and distracted note of Mr. St. John, in which he besought her to hasten to the bedside of their suffering child, who in the moments of agony had called loudly for his mother. With her bosom tortured by maternal solicitude and apprehension, Lady Florence dreamt not of disobeying the summons—she thought but of her child. Every other passion gave way to this one object; and always in extremes, and acting from violent impulse, the hurried note which she pinned to Julian, to account for her sudden departure, amidst the distraction and incoherence of its expressions, bore reproaches to him as one accessory to her guilty negligence of her children. Then again, as if recalled to a sense of her injustice, she besought him to pardon the petulance of an agonized and bewildered heart. She spoke in the most touching manner of the anguish of her feelings, and concluded by entreating him still to think kindly of one whose affection for him had led her into crimes and sorrows beneath which her affrighted spirit now quailed with horror.

She had scarcely sealed her letter, when the carriage was announced as being in readiness for her journey. She lost not an instant, but quickly descending the stairs, and heedless of the expostulations of her maid, who besought her to taste the warm coffee she had prepared for her, she set forth in the dusk of the cold wintry morning, to reach Marston as fast as the speed of four horses could convey her; and of which, through Mr. St. John's care, relays had been ordered on the road.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"Fortune and I are friends: I do enjoy
At ample point all that I did possess,
Save these men's looks; who do, methinks, find out
Something in me not worth that rich beholding
As they have often given."

BLANCHE had been inexpressibly shocked by the death of her uncle, which the circumstances attending it had rendered so truly awful. Had the poor sufferer calmly resigned his existence, soothed and sustained, by all those immediately connected with him, she then would have shed natural tears; but she must at the same time have felt relieved at his having been mercifully taken from a life of sickness and suffering. Now she shuddered with horror, when she thought that the event was indeed arrived which they had so long anticipated; but reflected, also, that the death-blow had been in a measure struck by his unfeeling wife, who must have been aware of that state of weakness, which rendered every agitation likely to prove fatal.

As in agony of mind, poor Blanche pressed her head upon her pillow, the night after the sad event had taken place, she could not drive from her thoughts the image of her uncle as she had last seen him. She remembered all the tenderness—the awful tenderness of the last scene—his fond close embrace—the feeble, fluttering pressure of his hand—the last anxious look of his glazed eye—the faint faltering words, struggling to give further assurance of his affection. She wept long and bitterly. How should she again meet her unfeeling aunt?—how maintain even the same cold intercourse which had subsisted between them? How should she drag through the wearisome eighteen months which must elapse before she would be of age, and at liberty?

The long heavy days which passed before the funeral, had been spent in strict seclusion by all the members of the family. Different feelings, actuated each. Blanche, whose spirits were much shaken, and who was nervous and wretched, gladly availed herself of the privilege of keeping to her own apartments. No Julian visited her in her solitude, and his estrangement caused another pang to her heart. It would have soothed her to have seen the beloved son of her poor old uncle again renew those habits of confidence with herself, which, before his illness he had observed—it would have consoled her to have mingled her tears with his; but he came not, and her proud spirit rebelled against suing for his notice.

The funeral of Lord Clairville had passed as such pageants usually do. The gloomy display—the nodding plumes—the emblazoned coffin—the mourners, who are usually a numerous and unconcerned company, discoursing to one another about the news of the day or the ordinary affairs of life—all was soon over; and the almost forgotten Viscount was brought only for a brief space to the recollection of surrounding multitudes, by the number of mourning coaches, and the other hired details of a spectacle which make, as it were, a mockery of grief.

Julian, of course, had attended as chief mourner; and amongst those who looked on his countenance, which was pale almost as death, and fearfully agitated, some gave him credit for strong filial affection, whilst others judged that the death of a father who was old and decrepit, and whose exit from this world put his son in possession of a princely fortune and ancient title, could not occasion such unusual emotion. They were right; still, how little can we

fathom the secrets of the laboring breast. It is truly said, "The heart knoweth its own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy." It is that bitterness, by which all conditions are equalized. The prince or the peasant alike may dwell on the melancholy remembrance of joys that are past and gone, or suffer from the actual presence of sorrow. The great man despises the gilded trappings of his state, and the poor forgets his poverty: both in the sad hour of affliction, or under the stings of awakened conscience, are fully sensible that man depends not on the favors of fortune for his happiness in this world.

Julian, although an affectionate son, had for so long a period been taught almost daily to expect his father's death, and had witnessed so much suffering in the poor invalid, that it could not be supposed that his present agitation was entirely connected with that event; but our readers will be aware, it arose from the contending passions of his mind.

He had just parted from Lady Florence, who, after one of those interviews, when she had used her utmost endeavors of fascination to work him to her purpose, sent him from her, his mind all confusion and excitement.

Amongst the funeral train, there were hands which pressed his with affectionate condolence; and eyes whose kind glances sought to meet his, and express the pleasure the meeting gave; Captain Cecil and Herbert, though uninvited by Lady Clairville, who herself had arranged the order of the ceremony, had joined the assembled mourners. Respect for the memory of the old Lord, and affection for the young one, had induced them to take this step: but they were grieved and surprised to meet with no return of cordiality, while the harassed air and wretched state of Julian at once distressed and shocked them.

The sight of those hitherto loved friends of his youth appeared to give the young man no pleasure. It is true that he returned with convulsive eagerness the pressure of Herbert's hand; but at the same time he turned away, and seemed to rejoice in the intimation that the *cortege* waited his joining it. By his care, he came no more in contact with his uncle or cousin that day, and gladly saw the numerous assemblage disperse, hailing with a sensation of relief the moment that found him once more alone.

It was thus the first days of his accession to rank and wealth were passed, lingering whole hours within the magical circle of an Armida, who he felt was luring him to destruction, and avoiding with anxiety all those who, his conscience told him, would so severely condemn, could they guess the criminality of his conduct.

Julian had learnt from Blanche the happy change in the fortunes of the Cecils, and with her warmly rejoiced that the clouds which had darkened over them were now in a measure dispersed. Still he went not near them, feeling their presence an intolerable reproach. Not that his entanglement with Lady Florence had caused any violation of plighted faith, or that it was expected he would now fulfil some vow of early affection. He was free from every sort of engagement; and his love for Evelyn Cecil, which from various circumstances had been in a measure opposed by all parties, had never been definitely spoken of but to his cousin Blanche. It is true, it had beamed forth in his every action, and

even the unsophisticated Evelyn must have been conscious of its existence; nevertheless, he had been so much under the dominion of his imperious mother, and so far repulsed by the fastidious delicacy of Captain Cecil, that had he in the face of all concerned formed another union, none were authorized or justified in uttering a word of reproach. But to himself, knowing the vows which had been inwardly breathed—recollecting that the first moment of his independence had been always designed as the period when he would claim the hand of Evelyn, he felt guilty of broken faith, and a tacit example of the fickleness of man.

It is not to be wondered at that, with such feelings of discomfort and self-reproach, the young Lord Clairville felt happy only during those interviews when, by the influence she exercised over him, the beautiful and devoted Florence banished every disquieting remembrance from his bosom.

The moment at length arrived when the letter was placed in his hands, which, written on the morning of the day that was to have witnessed their flight and perfect surrender of themselves to the guilty feelings which actuated them, now seemed to put an end altogether to the rash scheme. Julian was thunderstruck, and for a time, life seemed bereaved of every charm. He dared not follow Lady Florence—he dared not even write to her, and breathe forth those passionate regrets which she had taught his heart to feel. All that remained for him was to wait, in the hope that her child's convalescence would bring to the tender-hearted Florence the recollection of all she owed to one, whose every feeling had been brought by her into subjection.

Immediately subsequent to the funeral of his father, Julian had removed entirely from Grosvenor Square to a house in Park Lane. There he felt his actions would be more independent of others, and himself freed from the chance of encountering Lady Clairville, or the almost equally dreaded Blanche.

The change of residence had perfectly effected his purpose, and a fortnight and more had elapsed without his once seeing that kind and affectionate cousin, whose society once had formed his only solace and happiness. In the solitude to which the departure of Lady Florence, and the still early days of his mourning had doomed him, he had leisure to reflect on the ingratitude of his conduct; and bitterly reproaching himself for his neglect, he resolved instantly to make some reparation by seeking Blanche, and acknowledging his fault, without, however, confiding to her the cause of his apparent estrangement.

In a few minutes he was at the door of Clairville House, and on learning from the porter that Lady de Cressy was at home, he proceeded at once to a small drawing-room, which was appropriated solely to her use. Much to his confusion, he found Herbert Cecil sitting with Blanche and Mrs. Stewart. Unprepared with reasons by which he could account for the want of even common courtesy that had kept him so long from seeking their residence, and renewing those habits of intimacy which had formerly subsisted between them, he felt uneasy and embarrassed. The constraint and nervousness of his manner imparted itself to that of Herbert and Blanche. Topics of the most common and uninteresting nature to them became the subjects of their conversation, and the interview seemed that of indifferent strangers rather than the affectionate friends they once were.

Julian at length became so painfully aware of the restraint and embarrassment of all present, that he could no longer support it; and rising abruptly alleging that there were some papers in the library to which he desired to refer, he hastily pressed the hands of his cousins, and left them.

When he found himself once more alone, his feelings were little more enviable. What recollections had the sight of Herbert brought to his mind! Since the departure of Lady Florence, half her power had fled. Withdrawn from the fascination of eyes which, like those of the rattle-snake, riveted the victim to its undoing—withdrawn from the daily contemplation of charms which might have moved an anchorite,—no longer the object of a thousand tender cares and attentions which had spent their whole witchery upon him, the ardor of Julian had burnt less fiercely, and he had even begun to consider whether the impression Lady Florence had made was not stamped rather on his fancy and his passions, than on his heart.

Herbert and Evelyn were so constantly associated together in his imagination, that to see the one must bring before him the image of the other; and although unlike, there was a look in the brother when he smiled, which, like a flash of lightning, brought Evelyn almost before his eyes.

"Compromised—infatuated wretch that I am!" he exclaimed, as he found himself in the solitude of the library; and he struck with vehemence his burning brow, which was even now suffused with blushes at his own criminal folly. "The silver cord which bound me to life is loosed; there is no more happiness for me. I have promised—and oh! what have I to perform?" he continued, speaking aloud the distracting thoughts of his bosom. "To what am I pledged? To that which must blight my prospects forever. And yet, sweet Florence, do I not love you? Alas! no—not love—infatuation, madness, passion, alone bind me to you. There is one whom it would be profanation to name, whilst my mind is influenced by such impure thoughts; it is she—it is that angel of purity who alone has had my love."

A long and gloomy reverie followed the frenzied expressions of his disquietude. It consisted of bitter, but too long delayed compunctions at the criminal conduct which had led him to the position in which he now stood; and agonized regrets for the happiness he had sacrificed, and to which but for that guilt, he might now have aspired.

Some one on entering the library roused him from his painful thoughts; and looking up, to his surprise he found that it was Blanche.

As if determined to remove the coldness which had almost unwittingly imparted itself to their late meetings, Blanche advanced at once towards him, and taking his hand affectionately, as in past time, she said kindly, "Why did you leave us, dear Julian? Why leave those who have always so truly loved you—and now join in regretting your estrangement?"

The question smote Julian to the heart, and to evade the answer it was so difficult for him to give, he, in his turn, asked why she had left Herbert to join one so unfit to replace him as a companion.

"Oh! Herbert has left me," she said gaily, wishing to dispel the gloomy querulousness with which Julian addressed her; "Herbert has left me expressly that I should come to you, dear cousin. I am to

tell you of all the brightening prospects of these dear Cecils. Julian, will you not accompany me to see them to-morrow morning? You have not met poor Evelyn since the day of your fall. You will find her still more altered. Distress has subdued her, more even than her tenderest friends could have suspected."

Julian recoiled as if a scorpion had stung him at the mention of Evelyn's name. He turned red, and then paler than ever; and he really trembled beneath the surprised gaze of his cousin. Scarcely able to articulate, he at length said, in a low faltering voice, "I cannot pay this visit with you, Blanche. I must be off to-morrow early for Oakwood, where my presence is absolutely necessary."

"Julian," said Blanche, reproachfully and earnestly, "are you really not anxious to see Evelyn? Are you so altered as to cease to love her as you used to do?" and she fixed her deep and expressive eyes inquiringly upon him.

"Ask me no questions, unless you wish to distract me!" exclaimed her cousin, starting from his chair, and pacing the room with hurried and agitated steps. "O Blanche, you little know what you cause me to suffer every time you mention that name. It is like probing a frightful wound. I shrink, and my flesh quivers under its influence. Say no more," he added vehemently, seeing that Blanche was about to speak. "I am going—and God knows when you will see me again—but, O, Blanche,—dearest cousin,—you who have! always been my kindest friend—pray for me; for I have lost the power of doing so for myself. I am, as it were, spell bound. Adversity! how blunt are all the arrows of thy quiver compared to those of self-reproach!"

Blanche felt shocked; and grieved; and more so, as she feared that she guessed too well the cause of all this anguish. To soothe his mind, she said, in tones of the gentlest kindness. "But, Julian, what is it that thus weighs so heavily upon your spirits, and draws you from your most natural and dearest ties? Confide in me—in the sister of your adoption—to whose advice you have so often listened. Speak to me—tell me all, and I will assist you to the best of my poor knowledge;" and Blanche again affectionately approached him, and seizing his reluctant hand, for he seemed bent upon making his escape, drew him towards her.

"Tell you!—sully your pure mind by the history of vice and folly!—pollute the air you breathe by repeating words which would convey a tale of shame!—No, no! Blanche, I dare no longer confide my sorrows to you; I must be alone with my misery." With these words he disengaged his hand from the kind grasp of his cousin, and hastily quitted the apartment, leaving her motionless with astonishment and distressed beyond measure, at thus witnessing what appeared to her a confirmation of the darkest suspicions to which the conduct of Julian had given rise.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

How happy must thy parents be
Who daily live in sight of thee!
Whose hearts no greater pleasure seek
Than see thee smile, and hear thee speak;
And feel all natural griefs beguiled
By thee their fond, their dutiful child.

LADY CLAIRVILLE still kept herself secluded in her apartments. Clad in the deepest sables, was it

sorrow that inclined her to solitude? or was it that she mourned over the frustration of all her long-cherished schemes? The latter was the case; and stung with the bitterest disappointment that the subjects of her machinations had escaped from her dominion, she brooded in sullen silence over the affairs of the last months. The voice of conscience, too, had whispered in her ear; and her troubled mind "saw forms which others saw not, and heard voices which sounded only in the ears of guilt." The sight of her niece she most sedulously avoided, for with her was associated all the particulars of Lord Clairville's death-scene. Blanche, profiting by her absence, had, with Mrs. Stewart's sanction, received the visits of Herbert Cecil; and now, still further presuming on the quiescent nature of her conduct, had resolved, without delay, to pay a visit to Kensington.

The morning after her interview with Julian, though deeply regretting that he had so absolutely refused to accompany her, she ordered the carriage for her expedition with many emotions of pleasure, and in a short time found herself at the door of the humble abode of the Cecils.

On first beholding the meanness of the habitation which had so long formed the home of those so dearly loved, and by education and habit so unfit for the poverty-stricken and vulgar aspect of everything around, tears started to her eyes, and there was an aching at her heart; but this was all dispersed as she ran hastily into the house, and to her perfect delight, felt herself pressed close to the bosom of her beloved Evelyn. Again and again did they enfold each other in the tenderest embrace, whilst tears of joy and affection dimmed for a while the lustre of their eyes. It was long before they spoke, and the two fair girls for the first few minutes could do nothing but gaze with affection upon each other's dearly-loved countenance. It appeared happiness too great for reality as they seated themselves together upon the sofa, held within each other's arms. The delight of Blanche, however, was not unmingled with sadness, as she became gradually aware of the great change which had taken place in the appearance of Evelyn. She was altered even since she had last seen her, and then it was but too perceptible that the six months of sorrow had done its work of change. But although the bright bloom was subdued, the cheek less round, was Evelyn less lovely? No,—to the most perfect beauty of contour and feature, was now added the charm of a more matured expression of countenance. She was altogether more womanly; the playful, laughing Evelyn had now become the thoughtful, dignified woman. Her life of trial and of action had formed her manners, and imparted to them a degree of firmness and self-possession which showed itself in every movement. She appeared to have gained the experience of years in this short apprenticeship of grief; and Blanche gazed upon her with affectionate admiration, but sighed as the recollection of Julian's apostasy gave sorrow to her heart.

"Can he indeed have renounced all claims to this charming girl?" she mentally asked herself. "And if Evelyn loves Julian as I do Herbert, what will be her feelings when she knows that he shuns her—that his heart is no longer fixed alone upon herself?"

These thoughts kept her for a few moments silent; but Evelyn in this hour of gladness seemed more than usually talkative, and Blanche's seriousness passed unobserved.

"Dearest, darling Blanche," said the grateful girl, "what do we not owe you? It is to your unexampled kindness and affection, united to the friendship of the Duke of Stralhaven, that we owe our present happiness. Mamma is daily recovering, now that through your means she is able to enjoy the society and tender care of our father. You know, I suppose, dear Blanche, that as soon as she is able to move, we are to go back to the dear Abbey. There we shall live in a very humble way for the present; but we are now well accustomed to poverty, and our wants are all curtailed. Fancy the happiness of feeling ourselves once more in our own dear home!—the home of our joyful childhood!"

"O Blanche! how can I express the gratitude—the overflowing thankfulness of our hearts towards those to whom we owe this blessing?" and here she covered with kisses the fair cheek which rested so lovingly upon her shoulder. "But, Blanche," continued Evelyn, seeing that the grateful expressions which flowed from her lips distressed her cousin, "tell me about Julian, for I am unhappy about him. Why has he not been to see us? Papa and Herbert said he looked so ill, so altered the day of our poor uncle's funeral: certainly, it was upon a sad occasion; but, Herbert tells me, that yesterday his appearance struck him as being equally changed; and that there was something about his manner which was unnatural, unlike himself."

"Julian is changed, dearest," Blanche replied, with some feelings of embarrassment, wishing to screen her cousin from the displeasure which his coldness might well occasion Evelyn; and yet, at the same time, with her open disposition, unable to conceal it from her. "Indeed, I fear that he is woefully changed. Still, knowing that his heart is so good, we ought not to condemn him unheard; but trust that time will explain his somewhat enigmatical conduct."

"We must trust so, indeed," said Evelyn, but with a manner so calm, so unconstrained, that Blanche was at a loss whether to attribute it to indifference, or to some little pique at the neglect manifested towards herself. She attributed it to the latter; but averse to enter into the subject, which to her was one of such deep regret, she quickly changed the conversation.

We may well imagine how much there was to say on both sides; so many questions to ask, so much to learn; with that ample topic, the renewed brightness of the prospects of the Cecil family, which even the knowledge that Captain Cecil was soon to be appointed to the command of a ship could scarcely darken. Still, however, Evelyn seemed bent upon reverting to the new Lord Clairville; and, during a short pause in the conversation said, anxiously, "But Julian; tell me about him. Has any misfortune befallen him? I feel for him as if he were a dear brother, for he has ever been to me the kindest of friends, so indulgent, so solicitous for my happiness!"

"But is he not more to you than a friend?" said Blanche; still believing that, however desirous Evelyn was to hear of Julian, she, at the same time, resented his apparent indifference to herself.

Evelyn looked down for a moment and was silent; then, turning to her cousin, she said, "It would be folly—it would be affectation, for me to deny that, since my childhood, I have been led to consider that, sometime or another, I was to marry

Julian; but I have never reflected seriously on the subject, until lately, dear Blanche; and now, I must say that I sincerely hope Julian only considered our engagement as I do—in the light of a childish play, a baby's whim."

"Evelyn, you surprise me! do you really not love Julian, or is this denial of a more tender feeling the result of offended pride? I feel disappointed and hurt for him, knowing so well his long devotion to you."

Evelyn shook her head incredulously, as she said, "I have grown very old, Blanche; and the last few months have been years of wisdom to me. My ideas have undergone a great change; and so it luckily appears have Julian's;" and here one of the arch smiles of former days played on her lovely lips. She paused, and then added, with much seriousness, "In truth, my ideas have become very exalted upon this subject; and I must confess my *beau idéal* of a husband does not quite coincide with that which I have formed of dear Julian. Perhaps the recollection of our childish days has diminished the consideration which I feel I must have for him who may be my husband. When I remember our games at hide-and-seek, our blindman's-buff engagements, and all the associations of romping and mirth, it perfectly destroys the illusion we are told presides over love, you cannot imagine, Blanche, the deep reverence which I feel that I must entertain towards the man who is to be my guide, my partner through life. I must be able to look up to him as a being superior to all others; a star, a shining light. My love for my husband must only be inferior to that which I feel towards my God; and I should hope, only in a more earthly manner, to be able to honor him to obey him, ay, even to fear him, at least, deeply to venerate him. O Blanche!" added the lovely girl, her eyes beaming with enthusiasm, and her color raised to the brightest tint, "how I could glory in such a husband! how devoted I could be to him! to no other could I give my heart. Nay, do not be angry with me, darling Blanche; there is no doubt but that Julian regards me now as I do him—affectionately, but nothing, nothing more!"

"Time works changes indeed!" sighed Blanche. "Julian certainly is changed; you, Evelyn, are not the same; I alone am unaltered, true to the affection I must ever bear your brother."

"And how I honor you, how I love you for that affection!" exclaimed Evelyn, with enthusiasm. "But, Blanche, you have placed your love on an object exalted as I have described. In Herbert, I am proud to say, is united all the qualities which command respect and admiration. Happy, happy Blanche! you love perfection; and you can attain it." Here Evelyn turned her head away, and her cousin saw with surprise an expression of deep dejection spread itself over her countenance, while her eyes filled with tears. Again the idea became paramount in her mind that Evelyn deplored the suspected change in Julian's feelings, and assumed the indifference it were now wisdom to entertain. Ere she could speak on the subject which excited her tenderest sympathy, or endeavor again to uphold Julian on the many points of his excellence, they were interrupted by the entrance of Captain Cecil, who came, all delight, to see his noble, generous niece; and during the remainder of the time she stayed at Kensington, there was no opportunity of further conversation with her cousin.

She had to visit the pale and still delicate invalid; for though Mrs. Cecil was now recovering; she was yet unable to move from her sofa; but she was happy, and blessed beyond her hopes; for she was now supported by her idolized husband, and looking forward to a return with him to the first Lonic of their wedded love.

Blanche was not allowed to go until she had caressed and admired the little baby, the pretty Walter, now Evelyn's sole charge. But the hour of parting at length arrived, though a promise of a speedy return took from it its bitterness. She returned home, pleasure and satisfaction filling her heart with abundant food for meditation. Still, however, there were some passages in Evelyn's conversation which bewildered and puzzled her; and she sighed that Julian should have proceeded to Oakwood, instead of cherishing that affection which she now felt almost certain Evelyn had once entertained for him.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

"But he, his own affection's counsellor,
Is to himself—I will not say how true—
But to himself so secret and so close,
So far from sounding and discovering—"

"Alas! that love, so gentle in his view,
Should be so tyrannous and rough in proof!"

It may appear strange and not according to nature, that a man, such as the Duke of Strathaven has been described, one who had no longer youth to excuse the ardor with which he cultivated a new acquaintance, should thus devote his valuable time and the powers of his superior mind almost wholly to the task of watching with an eye of the tenderest solicitude over the fortunes of a family who, until within the last few months, were scarcely known to him. The mystery, however, is soon solved when the truth is declared, that from the earliest period of his acquaintance with Evelyn Cecil, our Hero-Duke had been inspired with a feeling which soon ripened into the warmest love, a love which was the most noble, the most generous in its nature, springing as it did from a heart in which was centered every feeling which does honor to the name of man; and notwithstanding his grave, proud deportment—his brilliant talents which made those around him shrink with a feeling of their own inferiority—his age, which had reached the period of more than forty, a time when "the hey-day of the blood is generally cooled"—still with all these solemn circumstances attached to his character, that very heart beat with all the violence of youthful ardor at the very name of a childlike girl who had scarcely numbered eighteen summers. Perhaps it would have been next to an impossibility to have seen this interesting being under the circumstances in which she was placed, and not to have admired with enthusiasm the beautiful conduct—the resigned and cheerful manner in which she performed the duties of her arduous trial. But when to this was added the surpassing grace and loveliness of the young creature, her gentle and affectionate nature, we can scarcely wonder at its having effect on the mind of one, who, though certainly more than double her age, and with the coldest exterior, possessed feelings fresh and warm as those of his early youth.

The Duke of Strathaven having been talked into marriage by prudent friends at an age which had placed him much under their control, had entered

upon that state without one spark of love, and, as might have been expected, this union brought with it no happiness. His military career had soon separated him from his wife; and it was during one of those long absences which the active part he had taken in the war in Spain had necessitated, that she died, leaving one son. This short matrimonial experience had not been productive of any charm, therefore the Duke, then a soldier of fortune, felt no wish again to be fettered by the chains of Hymen. He followed fame as the mistress most easily wooed and won. While his country and its interests absorbed his every idea, his son, brought up by an indulgent and thoughtless mother, had been nurtured in the very lap of luxury, and his feelings from his earliest infancy had been enervated and perverted. His father saw with sorrow the effects of his own neglect; but it was then too late, and dissipation and immorality sprang from the seeds too deeply sown. The character of Fitz-Henry formed itself into that of the cold-hearted yet profligate, the profuse and yet selfish worldling. The Duke's natural and domestic feelings were here again checked, and with sorrow and disappointment at his heart, he again turned with renewed energy to the service of the state. But there is an inscrutable destiny which connects the affairs of man. Every event has its own determined direction. Accident, chance, and fortune, are words which we often hear mentioned, and much is ascribed to them; but they are words without meaning. That chaos of human affairs, through whose confusion the eye can scarcely penetrate, is all clearness and order in the sight of Him who directs and brings forth every event in its due time and place, and circumstances in themselves inconsiderable have yet turned the whole course of things into a new direction.

The hour which brought Evelyn Cecil to the notice of the Duke was indeed a momentous epoch in his life. She became indelibly stamped on his imagination, which from that time her image never left. Long forgotten feelings rose to his heart; passions which had long been calmed and lulled into forgetfulness began once more to agitate his breast. At first he would not allow even to himself that he loved the young girl, to whom he might indeed have held the place of father. It was too absurd, too foolish; he must be in a state of second childhood; he was ashamed of himself and of his own feelings. But in vain he sought to struggle with them; the arrow had sunk deep into his heart, the random shot had struck him vitally; and the invincible Duke, who had stood the blast of war, the cannon's searching fire, with unshrinking fortitude, was now subdued, —tamed to the softness of a woman by the fascinations of a fair young creature, whose mild though beaming eyes had kindled a flame of fire in his heart which burnt fiercely and steadily.

But although the Duke loved with all the intensity of an ardent nature, he from the first considered his passion hopeless. He was aware of the attachment of Julian to his cousin, who had partially made him the confidant of his love; therefore he was in a measure bound in honor to conceal all he felt, and to smother the flame ere its influence became too powerful. But it was in vain that he combated with his affection; in vain he thought of Julian, —his handsome form, his youthful bearing, and all his claims to her affection; —still he loved, and loved almost to madness.

Although painfully impressed with the utter hopelessness of his passion, still it was so exalted in its nature, that while it doomed him to endless sorrow and regret, it by no means diminished his wish to benefit the relatives of her so cruelly withheld from him; and soon in viewing the general excellence of those who had suffered so severely, a strong feeling of solicitude for their welfare took possession of his benevolent and noble heart. Once enlisted in their cause, great were the efforts which he made to benefit them; and in an incredibly short time Captain Cecil's affairs were in a state of arrangement which brought to every member of his family comfort and happiness. It is true that he was powerfully aided by the generous Blanche, who insisted upon being responsible for a large sum which was raised to liquidate some of her uncle's most pressing debts. Fain would the Duke have taken upon himself the whole; but she was firm, and he could not but submit to arguments enforced with her best eloquence.

"Kind as it is in you," she would say, "still, my dear Duke, it must not be. My uncle's family have no claim upon you, no kindred, no tie such as binds me to them. Remember how rich I am, how unencumbered is my fortune, how few come into an income free as mine. Had I been a man, perhaps some heavy college debts, losses at play, besides interest on borrowed money, might have caused a considerable reduction in my thousands and tens of thousands. But these few I shall never miss, and my prosperity can never be diminished by an act which has good motives for its performance, and is merely a proper use of those gifts which have been so liberally bestowed upon me. Indeed, my kind friend, I must and will have my own way in the business."

The Duke smiled and pressed the little generous hand which was thus stretched out to do good. He however insisted upon standing security for the sum that was to be raised; while Mr. Disney, the lawyer, made those arrangements by which the concerns of Captain Cecil could be most effectually benefited.

It was finally decided that Riversdale Abbey should not be sold, but reserved for the future residence of the family; and a sum, small, but adequate to their wants, was set aside for their use, while the rest of the proceeds of the estate was given up to the creditors for the further liquidation of the debts.

Herbert's commission the Duke insisted should be his sole act; but he did not stop even there. His influence was used for the father also, and Captain Cecil received an intimation that he might shortly expect to be appointed to an important, and, it was expected, lucrative command.

This was the clouded horizon of the Cecils gradually clearing; bright sunshine beamed forth on a prospect so long gloomy and obscured; while the kindness and delicacy with which their two benevolent friends had entered into their sorrows and destitution, served still further to enhance the gratitude and happiness their rich benefits called forth.

The family were now only waiting for Mrs. Cecil's restored strength to return to Riversdale, and this hope rendered supportable the weakness which rendered her immediate removal impossible.

During the period which intervened before they could quit London, the Duke still indulged himself by frequent visits to Kensington. Soon they would be gone, and then to him all would be over; he should then relinquish Evelyn's society for ever.

It was thus he endeavored to satisfy his own conscience, which often whispered to him how fatally he was trifling with his own peace of mind, thus to linger with such exquisite pleasure in the society of one so many circumstances bade him consider almost affianced to another, and from whose enchanting presence, prudence told him so imperatively to fly.

How strange a mystery it would have appeared, how almost incredible to the world—the admiring world in which he lived—could it have seen the proud unconquered Duke, the idolized hero, enslaved, subdued, pliant in the hands of a young, childlike-looking girl, watching her every look—turning pale if her gaze did not dwell upon him with its wonted kindness—and trembling if the name of his rival passed her lips. His heart indeed sunk, and his courage failed him when he thought that ere long he must hear of the being, whom his very soul idolized, having given heart and hand to another. There was now no obstacle remaining in Julian's path, he was free to claim her as his own. But he came not. And still the Duke lingered, still were his steps directed daily towards the lowly dwelling which contained the gem so precious in his sight.

The universality of love is well described in many a distich, but in none better than the well-known lines of Scott:—

"In peace, love tunes the shepherd's reed;
In war, he mounts the warrior's steed;
In halls, in gay attire is seen;
In haunts, dancing on the green—
Love rules the court, the camp, the grove,
And men below, and saints above.
For love is Heaven—and Heaven is love."

Thus much for the extensiveness of its reign; but who can describe the strange inconsistencies by which the wisest have shown their subjection to its sway? Alas! it would be an ungracious task to note down all the fearful metamorphoses which love effects:—wisdom turned to folly, virtue to vice, courage to timidity—benevolence to misanthropy. Still there are some brighter changes. Avarice beneath its touch will become profusion; indolence, activity; thoughtlessness, consideration; and selfishness, philanthropy. With all the books which have been written—all the stories told upon the subject, it is yet unexhausted, therefore, leaving it to abler hands, we will proceed with our tale, which offers one among the many examples of the transformations which passion creates.

The self-command which had been the boast—the source from whence all the fame of the Duke had arisen, was now entirely shaken. Years of self-denial were sacrificed to the enchanting weakness which subdued him; and every feeling, but that of honor, merged in the deep affection of his heart. He, however, did not resign himself to this state without a mighty struggle. He sought to dissipate his thoughts in the whirl of his varied and important occupations; but all in vain. His secretaries looked at each other in surprise—his friends and acquaintances wondered. The calm, the self-possessed statesman was no longer the same: and those around him, who loved as well as respected him—who looked upon him as a being too noble—too exalted to be assailed by the force of human passion, were filled with distress at the idea that the mighty mind the lofty spirit were disturbed by the inroads of some secret grief or approaching malady.

The elder Mrs. Cecil still remained at Strathhaven.

House. By the care of the Duke she was to be restored to the lovely home which compassion for a son's necessities had induced her to quit. She now waited until the necessary arrangements could be effected; and was rejoicing in the hope that the warm-hearted *Blanche de Cressy* would be suffered by *Lady Clairville* to accompany her.

The two little *Cecils* were also still the favored guests of the benevolent Duke; and the beautiful and affectionate little beings had become so completely attached to him, that they watched for his return when he had gone from home, and were always in attendance at his breakfast-table. Often whilst the lovely little *Laura*, who was scarcely nine years old, occupied her usual seat on an ottoman at his feet, her likeness to her sister *Evelyn* would affect him in the most powerful way; and when with her upraised eyes, and fair ringlets thrown back, she would listen to him with looks of childish, but tender affection, often did his eyes fill with tears; and more than once, after having clasped the child to his heart with almost convulsive energy, he was obliged hastily to leave the room, to hide an emotion of which he was ashamed. But it was then that the childish image of the more matured and beautiful *Evelyn* brought to his heart with a sense of desolation, the recollection of her surpassing loveliness, and probable devotion to another.

Sometimes the question would occur to him, "Would she have loved him, even if her affections had been disengaged?" Oh! no: it could not be—it was out of nature. His position in the world—his rank—his influence might command respect; but not the love of an artless and unworldly girl, whose youth might lead her to regard him as a father. "Sweet *Evelyn*!" he would mentally exclaim, "why were you brought before my eyes to unman me—to make me, for the first time, a really wretched and discontented man?" But although he so bitterly deplored a fate which rendered as things of nought every advantage which he possessed, the Duke had still the satisfaction of using those advantages for the benefit of one so tenderly beloved; and from his generous influence comfort dawned from every quarter upon the *Cecil* family.

CHAPTER XL.

"O sweet love be
Of the wide world the glory and the dream!
Enough for me
To mark and tell thy triumphs yet divine,
No love so gentle, or so deep as mine."

"*MARY*," said Captain *Cecil*, after having sat for some time in silence by the sofa of his wife, "I am thinking, dearest, of our *Evelyn*. It appears to me that she is looking very ill—certainly much altered as to spirits. How glad I shall be when she is out of this confined house, and breathing the pure air of *Riversdale*. I feel that I owe my precious child gratitude, as well as tender affection, for all that she has done for me; and every time that I look upon her pale cheek—every sigh that heaves from her gentle bosom goes to my heart."

"But you must remember, dearest *Herbert*," Mrs. *Cecil* replied, sharing, yet wishing to remove his anxieties, "that our child has had much to encounter; her spirits have been harassed beyond their strength. She will soon be herself now that you are here, and that we are all so happy."

The father said no more—he did not wish to distress his still invalid wife with all the bitter feelings

with which his mind was possessed; but it was in the continued estrangement of *Julian* that he fancied he could trace the cause of the evident depression of his daughter's spirits; and his heart swelled with indignation when the thought struck him, that the unaccountable conduct of his nephew arose from motives mercenary, calculating, or versatile. He guarded most scrupulously from making any comment on *Julian's* continued absence; but it was for ever occurring to his thoughts, that it was through him his own perfect child, the pride and darling of his heart, should be made thus wretched. "I like some tender tree, the pride and beauty of the grove, graceful in its form, bright in its foliage, but with the worm preying at its heart." The idea was agony; and Captain *Cecil* knew not what to do, how to proceed in order that he might give relief to his idolized *Evelyn*.

It was, indeed, true that a secret sorrow sat heavy at her heart—it was true that the unbidden sigh rose often in her breast; her young and pure affections were indeed bestowed, and she loved with fervency, but not the young *Lord Clairville*. She deemed her love hopeless; and her bright eye grew dim; her soft cheek became pale; and like many whose lovely forms are changed and none can tell the cause that blights their loveliness, her heart ached with the consciousness of unrequited and concealed affection. "As the dove will clap its wings to its side, and cover and hide the arrow that is pressing on its vitals, so it is the nature of woman to conceal from the world the pangs of unconfessed affection. The love of a delicate female is always shy and silent; even when fortunate she scarcely breathes it to herself: but when she believes it otherwise, she buries it in the recesses of her own bosom, and there lets it cower and brood among the ruins of her peace. With her the desire of the heart has failed; the great charm of existence is at an end; she neglects all the cheerful exercises which gladden the spirits, quicken the pulses, and send the tide of life in healthful currents through the veins. Her rest is broken; the sweet refreshment of sleep is poisoned by melancholy dreams." "dry sorrow drinks her blood; but no one knows the mental malady that has sapped her strength."

There was one who had been to *Evelyn* as a ministering spirit in the time of distress—who with the most considerate delicacy dried the tears from her eyes—who had saved a beloved parent from exile and misery—and was daily heaping benefits upon them all, in every form; still he was too great, too exalted, she thought, for her to dare to love. For some time, however, this passion had been gaining ground in her heart—unperceived and unencouraged by herself. At one time she had believed that the high-wrought feeling which she entertained towards him was gratitude—devotion—reverence; but still the intensity of these feelings frightened her. There had been a period when the Duke of *Strathhaven's* visits to the little parlor were hailed with unrestrained joy—with freedom and affection. His hand had been pressed by hers without a thought of embarrassment, or a sensation of reserve. But now, how different was the aspect of her mind; if he came not, she was wretched; and if she heard his well-known knock, how she trembled; and with what averted, downcast eyes she came into his presence. Whilst he remained, she listened to the sound of his voice with a throbbing

heart; but her own seldom now joined in the conversation; and she sat with an air of dejection and constraint as if his presence gave her pain rather than pleasure. But when he rose to depart—when the last sound of his footsteps fell upon her ear, then did a feeling of loneliness and desolation creep over her senses which was wretchedness itself.

When the conviction of the nature of her feelings first dawned upon her mind, she felt almost stunned. She was convinced it was madness—presumption; and she shrunk ashamed at her own boldness. Could such a man as the Duke of Strathhaven look down upon her, a child—a weak young girl—with any sentiments save those of kindness and compassion? “Save me from myself,” she would wildly whisper, “save me from the bitterness of self-reproach for thus giving way to emotions worse than folly;” but it was in vain that she argued with herself, and sought to calm the constant agitation of her spirits; the image of this benefactor, with all his manly and dignified bearing—the remembrance of his tender kindness and compassion—the impression of his conversation—the beautiful tones of his voice—all had stamped itself upon her heart, and there it remained indelibly fixed, producing a love which seemed daily to become more and more excessive. She had, indeed, embarked her whole soul—invested her every feeling in this affection; and with poor Evelyn the case indeed seemed hopeless, threatening the utter bankruptcy of the heart.

Little did Evelyn suspect the reciprocity of sentiment which existed between them. Little could she imagine the anguish of mind with which the Duke looked upon her altered demeanor, so unlike the frank, ingenuous manner that had first marked her behavior, the smile of cordial affection with which she had ever greeted his approach. “I know not what all this means—she is wretched at the neglect of that insensible Clairville,” he would musingly conjecture; and he felt indignant astonishment at the conduct of Julian. “But this must not be,” he thought, “whatever may be the cause, it is torture to see her thus unhappy. It must be the mercenary and worldly-minded Lady Clairville who has exercised some arbitrary power over the mind of her son. I must seek him, and so endeavor to bring peace to the bosom of this gentle being, although by thus doing, my sad destiny may be accomplished; still I have sworn to watch over her happiness, and though my heart-strings may burst in the effort, still the struggle shall be made.”

Lady Clairville was now reaping the harvest which she herself had sown. She had now arrived at that moment when the voice of nature and conscience would make itself heard within her breast.

With a wisdom peculiar to the great Searcher of all hearts, he has made the punishment due to misconduct to arise directly from the breast of the offender—to be inflicted by his own hand. A natural sense of right and wrong, produces an apprehension of merited punishment after the commission of a crime, and the guilty feels conscious, whilst his heart is bleeding within him, that he is only “reaping the fruits of his own doings,” the sense of deserved suffering both aggravates the penalty and forces an acknowledgment of its justice.

The dying struggles, the distorted countenance of the expiring man had made an impression on the unsparing heart of the wife, which surprised herself. The thought which forced itself upon her, “Have I

killed him?” struck like a barbed arrow upon her heart. And as she had stood over him whilst the breath was departing from his attenuated frame, the remembrance of his unflinching kindness—his uncomplaining sufferings, had come like an unbidden guest before her memory, and she shrunk with horror from the emotions of contrition which were beginning to overwhelm her. In the retirement of her chamber, how many other reflections intruded themselves! In prosperity everything tended to flatter and deceive; but when for a time removed from the world by this event of gloom, the illusions of life vanished, while its avocations and its pleasures no longer afforded that shelter which she before was wont to find from conscience.

When borne with a smooth gale along the stream of life, and beholding every thing proceeding according to her will, she had never anticipated this termination to her imperious wishes. Basking in the sunshine of prosperity, she never for a moment foresaw that her schemes might be frustrated, and her power gone. And Julian her son, the only object who had ever called forth natural feeling in her bosom, was to her at this moment no source of solace. She felt that he was estranged from her. In her last interview with him she was aware that she had spoken words which he could not easily forget or forgive. Would he not also hear from Blanche all the particulars of the disgraceful scene which hastened his father’s death? Would he again see her? or was the influence which she once possessed over him entirely destroyed? Alas! she feared that it was so. Besides this, there were two alternatives of action, one of which he would most probably adopt. He would fly in guilt with Lady Florence, St. John, or what was worse to the still ambitious mother, marry Evelyn Cecil! She gnashed her teeth in impotent agony, feeling that this was the dreaded climax; one which would see her despised and overlooked; and her fierce haughty spirit quailed within her at the reflection that she had brought it all upon herself.

From Blanche, Julian had heard nothing; but from the nurse who had long been in attendance upon Lord Clairville, he learned by questioning her all the particulars of the last illness of his father. With tears and hesitation were the details at length given, and Julian heard enough to strike him with dismay and disgust. He felt that his mother had sacrificed his father, in the attempt to injure him; and his already excited mind was goaded to the bitterest anguish. The more he reflected upon the circumstances which had hastened the end of his father’s sufferings, the more he felt alienated from the unnatural woman who had worked this evil. He could not bring himself to the task of yet seeing her, therefore he left London without one demonstration of kindness or even common notice. Now indeed did she weep for herself, and feel with a sickening sensation of horror that her sins had overtaken her. The idea of seeing Blanche was most painful, recalling as she would her plans for the aggrandizement of the ungrateful son who now despised her.

It was owing to this dread on the part of Lady Clairville that Blanche received her sanction to accompany Mrs. Cecil to Riversdale.

The moment was come when her venerable grandmother was about to return to the lovely cottage which the Duke had been enabled to restore her. Refusing to listen to all her expressions of gratitude

referring all he did to the wish of returning in some measure the kindnesses which she had showered upon Walter Fitz-Henry, the Duke yet felt an exquisite pleasure in witnessing the glow of happiness which lighted up the delicate features of the old lady as he handed her and her little grand-daughters into the carriage which was to convey her to her cherished home. The happiness of Blanche was little less in degree when with a heart beating high with anticipations of delight, she found herself one of the happy travelling party.

While driving rapidly from the dismal grandeur of Grosvenor Square,—from the chilling atmosphere in which her aunt, her dreaded aunt, resided—she thought of the tranquil happiness of the cottage, the joyful freedom which she would enjoy, unshackled by the restraint of form, unchilled by fastidious etiquette. She knew also that the Abbey was soon to be occupied, and that a certain young Guardsman was to have leave of absence in order to accompany his family to their home.

Although the spring was only just putting forth its early verdure, still the country looked beautiful, and as full of hope and joy as the young being who with a heart full of thankfulness, looked upon its opening beauties.

The mind of Blanche was formed to enjoy the pleasures which arise from pure and unworldly sources. But she had now an additional cause of satisfaction from the remembrance that she had been instrumental in restoring her beloved friends to their home, and to that peace of mind which, without her aid, they would not now have enjoyed. Yet it was with no feeling of exultation or ostentatious pride that the thought occurred to her; but with humble gratitude and pious joy she felt that she had been an instrument in the hands of Providence to perform an act of which the memory must ever be one of her sweetest reflections.

They journeyed on swiftly, but to the impatient Blanche the moments lagged. At length, within a short mile of the cottage, they had reached the summit of a steep hill which led directly to the Abbey, and then the well-known and oft-remembered view burst upon her enraptured sight. The graceful river meandering peacefully through the lovely country, its banks studded with picturesque and highly ornamental country seats; the range of luxuriant hanging woods of Riversdale rising to the view: those woods so beloved by her as the scene of many a happy day. It was there they had passed those festive hours of mirth and glee when, having spent the morning in rowing and fishing in the stream which flowed below the wood, they spread their repast beneath some shady tree and feasted with rustic simplicity. Every spot that she now passed told a tale of by-gone days, and Blanche felt notwithstanding all her happiness that the tears were flowing fast from her eyes.

"Dear Herbert, dear Evelyn! how much you have suffered since you left this sweet place!" she exclaimed. "Thank God, that is all over! and what joy it will be, dear grandmamma, to welcome them back to their loved and lovely home. But look," she continued with enthusiasm, as they now arrived at a part of the road which revealed the whole of the Abbey, "there it is! there is the tower, that pretty oriel window with the roses always in full bloom." And although the fine old trees were still leafless, although summer had not brought its beauties to perfection, still a bright setting sun threw a ray of

cheerful glory over the whole scene which seemed to smile a welcome to the noble girl.

Familiar faces now greeted her on every side, and in a few minutes more the carriage stopped before the gate of the cottage, which was only separated from the Abbey by a plantation, through which a path led to the terrace walk of the Abbey.

It was a happy sight to see the delight with which the good Mrs. Cecil led the way to the drawing-room. When there, she turned, and enfolding Blanche in a tender embrace, said, "Thanks to you, my child, my noble generous girl, that I am thus blessed!—Blanche," she continued, when they were seated side by side on the sofa, her grandchild's hand pressed within her own, "Blanche, I scarcely dared hope to be spared for such happiness. But God is merciful. He has, it is true, tried me in His wisdom, but now He has wiped the tears of bitterness from my eyes. Those I now shed are tears of joy and gratitude. You, my dear child, have indeed proved yourself worthy the great trust which has been vested in you. But for you and our excellent Duke I should have sunk in sorrow to my grave, parted from the son of my affections, and wretched at the idea of his sufferings."

"But, dearest grandmamma," Blanche replied, kissing the hand which held her own, "do not thus praise me for the little I have done. Believe me, I do not deserve it. My actions have been purely selfish. You know my feelings are so completely interwoven with every circumstance connected with my dear uncle, that their gratification I fear has been the inciting cause. You must not say more than that you rejoice with me, that we have found a friend, oh! such a friend! as this charming Duke, who has with such unprecedented kindness assisted me in the performance of filial duty. Yes, dear grandmamma, I indeed consider myself in the light of a daughter to my uncle. And," she continued, hiding a blushing cheek in the bosom of her delighted and venerable auditor, "you know that one day I shall have a right to the envied title. Herbert knows that I love him, and has told me that he loves me. In my peculiar situation, and with his lofty ideas, I have been forced almost to be the wooer; but tell me, dear grandmamma, that you do not think me ungraciously for having so openly avowed this cherished affection, and I shall be happy."

"I have only to say, my much loved girl, that all your actions have been marked with excellence and purity. I honor and respect you, my darling, for thus confessing an attachment which has for its basis every thing that is good and noble. As long as you live, Blanche,—and may you long be spared to be a blessing to all those around you,—in prosperity, and even in adversity, this act of your young heart will always present itself to you with a brightness that nothing can tarnish. You will think of it, and the remembrance of your fond grandmother may accompany the recollection, and recall to your mind how she blessed you,—how she called upon the Almighty to bless you, and to reward you for all your tender kindness to those she so dearly loves. You have a mother's gratitude, my child,—an aged mother's prayers. I may not live to see your happiness; age and sorrow have drawn my days nearly to their close; but trust my words, Blanche, that you will be happy—trust the experience of an old woman who has seen, that God heaps temporal rewards as well as punishment."

CHAPTER XII.

"Still the blue streamlet gusheth—
 Still the broad river rusheth—
 Still the calm silence husheth—
 The heart's disease;
 But who shall bring our meetings
 Back again?
 What shall recall thy greetings—
 Loved in vain."

Who can describe the feelings of ecstasy with which the Cecil family returned to their dearly-prized home—the seat of all their best enjoyments, and which they had believed they had relinquished for ever? With grateful joy Captain Cecil supported his still feeble wife from the carriage, and assisted her to seat herself within the fine old Gothic porch which served as the entrance to the great hall of the Abbey. He wished her to gain composure, before she entered the home of her heart, where every object which met her eye, would serve to renew the agitation which happiness now caused her to feel. It was here that most of her children first drew breath; here their tender infancy was reared with care—here their innocent childhood sported—their careless youth grew up in virtue and happiness.

If there are any names known among men that awaken tender sentiments in the breast more than others, they are the names of father, mother, spouse, child, brother, and sister: with these our thoughts are recalled to home—that spot within which lies all that is most dear to the human heart. To be absent from it, is one of the saddest grievances of life—and the remembrance when distant and hopeless of return, sinks the spirits into deeper depression. Its very dust seems precious to the exile; its very corner becomes, in his eyes, a sort of consecrated ground, the thoughts of which often touch the heart with more acute interest than can be raised by scenes more rich or objects more splendid. These are the feelings which the God of nature has implanted in the mind of man; and base and vile is he who strives to erase them, intimately as they are connected with our very best affections.

Captain Cecil, who knew what it was to think of his home, as of a joy past and gone, now with gratitude and happiness found himself again sitting under "his vine and his fig-tree," in peace and comfort.

Blanche was at the door to receive them, and the presence of her, who had been indeed to them as an angel of light, seemed to complete their perfect happiness.

Herbert, for the first time, was now free to pour forth to his beloved and noble cousin all the emotions which had so long, though secretly, been cherished in his heart. So truly happy was the sweet girl in the presence of so many loved objects—so free and unshackled did she feel thus removed from the constraint which had impeded every flow of youthful sentiment—that, little selfish, as was her nature, she was only mindful of what was immediately passing before her eyes. She saw her uncle with his fine manly countenance beaming with chastened happiness. It is true, the furrows which care had deeply planted on his brow had not yet vanished; but still she fancied in her joy, that every hour they were becoming less perceptible. Her aunt, too, though still delicate, only required what she now enjoyed, soon to be quite herself again. And her dear Evelyn was by her side; and Herbert!—that Herbert for whose society she had so long sighed, for whom her

young heart had felt such true and disinterested kindness. This was all that she saw, and Evelyn's pale cheek and dejected manner escaped her usually quick attention.

After a few days of almost intoxicating delight, she was suddenly sobered and saddened by finding Evelyn in tears. She had unexpectedly entered her room, after an absence of some hours, Herbert having been rowing her on the river. Evelyn had declined being of the party, on the plea of having her books to arrange; but when Blanche rushed joyfully into the apartment, scarcely expecting, however, still to find her there, she was shocked to see her sitting by the open casement in an attitude of despondency. The books were all lying about in confusion untouched. Blanche's gay countenance immediately clouded with sympathy. "My own sweet Evelyn," she said, affectionately kissing her, "what is the matter? I hoped and thought that all your griefs were over. What is it, dearest? Tell me, whose heart is wrapped up in your happiness. Alas! have I been so absorbed by my own blissful feelings, as to have suffered any grief to have reached you without my heeding it? Confide in me, dear Evelyn, and be assured that I can never be really happy while my sweet sister is sad."

"Nay, dearest Blanche," replied Evelyn, wiping away her tears, and endeavoring to look cheerful, "pray do not speak thus. To see you and dear Herbert so deservedly and perfectly happy, to me ought to be quite sufficient joy. Do not heed my foolish depression. It will wear away. You must attribute it to the state of my nerves; they are weak at present and just on my return to this beloved home are still further tried. My native air will soon restore me: and really, Blanche, as I sit at this window, and look at the lovely prospect—that shining river so pure, so glassy—yonder picturesque spire, rising from amidst the venerable trees which surround it—the pretty paragon peeping from between them—it appears to me so beautiful—so exquisite—that I believe I weep for joy;" but as she pronounced these last words, a deep shuddering sigh belied them.

Blanche looked at her gravely and mournfully. She was silent; but her quick perception and penetrating judgment were soon set to work; and the thoughts of Julian's neglect, and its probable effect on the affectionate mind of Evelyn, again occurred to her. "There is more here than meets the eye," she inwardly ejaculated; but with tact she did not then pursue the subject; and quickly changing it spoke of other things; so that when the dinner-bell rang, the two fair cousins obeyed its summons, both apparently in cheerful spirits.

However, Blanche reflected long and seriously upon the foregoing accident; and reverting at the same time to past occurrences, the idea came more forcibly to her mind than ever, that Evelyn was actually mourning over the coldness and estrangement of Julian. She felt that she stood in a difficult position; and notwithstanding her averseness to interfere in matters of such deep importance, that she was in a manner called upon to instruct Julian in the extent of the feelings which his strange conduct had called forth, convinced, as she was also, that whatever might be the circumstances which now influenced him, his affection for Evelyn had been too real to be so soon destroyed.

A letter was at length despatched to Lord Clairville, written with great caution, it is true; but still

disclosing enough of Evelyn's supposed sentiments to call upon some decided conduct in him.

Although Blanche had hesitated for some time before taking so decided a step, the instant her letter was gone beyond the reach of recall, she felt happy and satisfied at her decision; and looked upon the pensive Evelyn with the pleasurable sensation, that the consciousness of having labored for her happiness was calculated to produce.

However, an incident soon occurred which filled her with dismay; and poor Blanche began to apprehend that with the purest intentions, and notwithstanding all her deliberation, she had acted most unwisely.

"Evelyn," said Captain Cecil one morning, as they were all assembled at the breakfast-table, "I have heard to-day from our excellent Duke." Evelyn, who was officiating as tea-maker, made no reply; but the now watchful Blanche was startled by seeing her cheek turn to an ashy paleness. "I had asked him," her father continued, "to come to us here to witness the happiness he has contributed to form, and to go over with me some of the happy scenes of our boyhood; to my great regret, however, he has refused us. But Herbert," Captain Cecil added, turning to his son, as if desirous of more attention than the silent and busily-occupied Evelyn seemed inclined to lend him, while at the same time he took a letter from his pocket; "here's a deeper cause of grief to me, though I think you must give me credit for some insight into politics, when I told you that the present ministry would not stay in a month. The Duke confirms me completely in this belief, by telling me that he has applied for the situation of Governor-General in India, and that in a few months, he will probably be removed from us for many, many years. What can possess such a man to accept such a situation,—one who is above it, both in station and fortune,—I can never imagine; and I shall be surprised if this country suffers a man of his abilities and usefulness to leave it. But,—" Captain Cecil was continuing, when a scream from Blanche arrested his attention, and in another moment he saw Evelyn fainting in her brother's arms.

It was some time before she recovered, and then she was so languid and faint that her father carried her up stairs and laid her upon her bed, where Blanche requested she might be left in perfect quiet, whilst she took her seat by her side.

She was long silent, and during this interval the mind of Blanche was not inactive. The whole truth, the history of all the secret sorrow which was clouding the fair prospects of poor Evelyn, was now revealed. She loved the Duke!—and Blanche trembled for her happiness, for could she be beloved in return by one so different in age and station, one whose talents and elevated rank had always placed him upon a pinnacle, to which few had dared to aspire? But still, she thought again of all his tender kindness to the family—the extraordinary interest which he had taken in their welfare—the affectionate manner in which he had ever expressed himself in their behalf, and a feeling of new-born hope brightened within her bosom. However, all was a dark uncertainty, and she felt that the happiness of Evelyn was at a perilous stake. She thought too of Julian—of the hopes and expectations she had so indiscreetly imparted to him, and the probable results of her letter. Reflection became most painful; but her attention was now called towards Evelyn by hearing her suppressed sobs, and Blanche could no

longer remain silent. She unclosed the curtain, and throwing herself on the bed by the weeping Evelyn, kissed her repeatedly as she said, "Tell me, dearest, what is all this—unburthen your mind to your tenderest friend. Rely on my honor, my best sympathy; and be assured that, when once your overcharged mind is relieved by confiding in one who can feel for your every sorrow, your every vexation, that you will be far less oppressed, and better able to struggle with the grief which now overwhelms you. Speak to me, my Evelyn, and do not thus afflict me."

Still Evelyn spoke not, moved not, while the silent tears rolled slowly down her pale cheeks. At that moment the door of the apartment opened, and Captain Cecil entered hastily, his countenance beaming with joy.

"My darling child!" he said, approaching the bed and taking her hand, "I have news for you that I know will cheer you. Yes, dear Evelyn, I have long seen how much you have been suffering it has been agony to me, you may well believe, to see my child—my best beloved, unhappy. But, cheer up, sweetest, he is come—all is explained, and you have now nothing to do but to compose yourself—to get up—smooth those dishevelled locks—bathe those tearful eyes, and prepare to receive at your feet the most devoted of lovers."

Whilst her father spoke, Evelyn listened with distended eyes, which brightened as he proceeded in his speech. She sat upright, and her fine hair, escaped from the comb, flowed around her shoulders; her countenance, which was pale as marble, when her father first approached her, was suffused, by degrees, with a faint tint of pink; her lips were parted—her eye glanced wildly around, and in a tone of voice, which at once denoted surprise, terror, and joy, she almost screamed out, "Whom do you mean?"

So wild was her look and voice that her father quite started and looked in dismay at Blanche, who, seated on the bed by her cousin, and almost supporting her in her arms, seemed scarcely less agitated than the poor girl whose distress she was so anxious to alleviate.

"Whom do I mean, my dear Evelyn?" her father replied, evidently alarmed at the excited state of his child, "who can I mean but one!"

"One!" there is but one, indeed! But, tell me quickly, I beseech you, his name;" and she covered her face with her hands, and bent her head upon her cousin's shoulder.

"My dear Evelyn, this is all very unlike you, my gentle enduring child; but," continued the distressed father, sighing heavily, "it is all my fault. All that you have endured for me and mine has shaken your nerves and destroyed your health; but your reward is at hand. Julian is here, all love, all tender anxiety, to make you the happiest of the happy."

"Julian!" groaned the suffering girl. But she moved not her head from the shoulder upon which it rested; and the terrified father soon perceived that she had relapsed into another fainting-fit.

CHAPTER XLII.

"It came at length; o'er thy bright blue eye the film was gathering fast,
And an awful shade passed o'er thy brow, the deepest and the last.
In thicker gushes strove thy breath—we raised thy drooping head,
A moment more—the final pang—and thou wert of the dead."

We left Lady Florence St. John in all the an

guish of mind which the intelligence of her child's danger had created, journeying with the utmost speed to his side, yet, in the intense anxiety of her feelings, thinking none seemed to participate with her in the desire of accelerating their progress. Her suspense was one of a dreadful nature; while the time which must yet intervene ere she could reach her boy, offered leisure for the most harrowing and startling reflections. At times she would ask the fearful questions, "Was this a dispensation sent from the Almighty in mercy or in vengeance? Was the Divine arm lifted up to smite or to reclaim? Was the blood of an innocent child required to wash out the sins of the mother?" Unhappy Florence! she was not the first sinner whose conscience acknowledged the justice of God in the sorrows he inflicts; and we may not wonder at the view she took of misfortune, unacquainted with it as she had hitherto been. She felt now that she could deplore in sackcloth and ashes the sin which she believed had brought judgment upon her. That she had, until now, partaken largely of the bounty of Heaven with listless and thankless indifference, that she had trodden the path of life and seen Providence only in its brightness and beauty, but that now she was made to feel and recognize the hand of God, when it guides the whirlwind and directs the storm.

There were still other feelings to enhance the misery of that dismal journey. How could she face the husband whom she had virtually abjured, without agony and burning shame? And his upbraidings; how bitter would they be for her heartless desertion of her babes? She felt now that she could crouch low before his knees for forgiveness, so abject are sin and grief combined. But every thing was light to her in the scale, when compared to the horrid anticipations of the state in which she would find her poor, beautiful, little Harry.

Her heart perfectly failed within her as she approached her home. When she entered the park gates, she had not courage to inquire for news of her child; but covered her eyes lest she should read in the looks of the woman who opened the gates a confirmation of her worst fears.

The carriage at length stopped; the door was opened, and Lady Florence sprang out and rushed into the hall. She there encountered Mr. St. John, who was evidently expecting her. His countenance wore the expression of the deepest grief, mingled with displeasure. He approached her with sternness; but when his eye fell upon her agonized features, when he beheld the inroads which only a few hours of misery had stamped upon her countenance, her humbled, altered mien, so unlike the haughty, indifferent Florence, his heart, which was also softened and subdued by sorrow, melted. He checked the words of reproach which were upon his lips, and catching her fainting form in his arms, he pressed her tenderly to his bosom, and burst into tears; while sobs, such as only proceed from the breast of a man, shook his whole frame.

"Oh! St. John!" shrieked the miserable woman, "in mercy be not thus kind. Spurn me, trample upon me, cast me off; but shelter not in your bosom one who is the cause of all this wretchedness. But, my child! St. John, tell me of my child! Is he dead?" and she stood wildly staring in the face of her husband.

"Not dead, but—"

"Dying!" screamed the mother; and she would

have fallen senseless upon the marble floor, had not she been supported by the weeping attendants; who conveyed her into the nearest room and laid her upon a sofa.

It was some time before she was restored to consciousness; and on again opening her eyes, she beheld, as if in mockery of her grief, exactly before her, a large full length portrait of her lovely boy. He was painted riding upon the identical pony which was the cause of all this woe. It was a splendid picture; the countenance beaming with animation, joy, and health. But what a torturing sight to this unhappy mother! It was the image of the sweet Harry as she had left him; and now in what a state would she find him! Oh! the horror of her mind at that moment! She covered her face with her hands to shut out the maddening sight; she wept upon the bosom of the husband she had deceived. Now she thought of him only as the father of her child; grief made common cause between them, and it was a support to find herself with him. Strange inconsistency! but so it was. She now clung for consolation to him, who a brief space before she would gladly have engaged never more to have seen.

His arm supported her as she with faltering steps sought the chamber of the expiring child. At length, in shuddering silence it was gained; and Lady Florence stood by the couch of the sufferer. There he lay, on the same little bed, where oftentimes she had seen him stretched in healthful slumber; his round cheek flushed with the crimson hue of sleeping infancy; his sunny locks clustering about his fair brow; his smiling mouth half open, disclosing his pearly teeth. How different was he now! His cheeks were pale and discolored; his eyes sunk and closed, but not in refreshing slumber. It was the torpor occasioned by the frightful accident. His golden curls had all been cut off; his head was covered with bandages, upon which were many drops of blood. The lips which were so fresh, so dewy, were now compressed and livid.

"My child! my child!" she exclaimed, in accents which betokened a heart pierced with bitterest anguish. "O my God! upon my own head have I heaped this misery; for my own sins I now bleed."

For two nights and days did this unhappy woman remain by the side of her child. No force, no persuasion, could move her. On her knees was she almost constantly fixed, with her lips pressed to the little unconscious hand thrown listlessly upon the coverlet. The hand once so round and dimpled became every hour more pale and attenuated.

It was a sight which might have afflicted the coldest heart, to have seen this lovely though faulty woman, in the attitude of grief and humiliation, she had taken; and who, with her fair hair hanging in strange disorder over her face and neck, resembled a Magdalen in some scriptural painting.

It was some time before she was aware of the occasional visits to the room, of a mild lady-like looking woman, who was in constant attendance in the sick chamber. She was the wife of the clergyman of the parish, who had only lately been presented to the living, and as yet unacquainted with Lady Florence.

On hearing of the accident which had happened at the Park, aware of the absence of the mother, she had instantly repaired to the spot to offer every assistance in her power to the wounded child. She found everything in the utmost confusion, and dis-

may seemed to render every one powerless. There was no mother's hand to smooth the pillow of the interesting little sufferer; and Mrs. Vernon's offered services were accepted with gratitude by the distracted father. She had intended to relinquish her post when Lady Florence arrived; but she soon perceived that her presence was more than ever required. Not for the poor child, for he was beyond the reach of her care; and was slowly, but surely, sleeping away the last remnants of existence. It was the wretched mother, to whom her care must be directed.

With grief—almost with terror—Mrs. Vernon viewed the blank and hopeless state of her mind—the unchristianlike despair which marked the sorrow of Lady Florence. She endeavored to whisper words of comfort; but they were unheeded, or received with impatience; still she was not to be repulsed, but tried to make allowances for the despair of a mother. She knew not how her misery was aggravated by the torture of self-reproach; or that busy memory brought before the afflicted woman all her faults—all the events of her misspent life.

Could she remember the few last months, and in her ignorance of all religion, not despair? She felt that the hand of God was upon her, and in the benighted state of her feelings believed that there was no hope left; that she was lost alike to happiness in this world and in the next. Overwhelmed, prostrate, and forlorn, she did indeed present a humiliating spectacle of one who mourns without hope. No prayer for help escaped her lips. Deep groans and exclamations of despair occasionally burst from her; but from these ejaculations Mrs. Vernon turned with sorrow. They were the accents of impotent grief, not humble, submissive supplications for aid.

"If she could but pray," thought this excellent woman, "strength might be vouchsafed to her." Alas! she guessed not that she beheld a woman who, had it not been for the thunderbolt which had fallen in her path, would ere that moment have broken every law, both human and divine—have heaped disgrace upon herself,—her husband,—the child whose approaching end she now mourned with such appalling frenzy. This knowledge would have taught Mrs. Vernon why she dared not pray; but still she would have whispered hope.

At length this wretched scene is closed: the little Harry has breathed his last sigh, his innocent spirit is released. His few last moments, however, were far from tranquil. A fierce struggle shook his little frame; and his mother's eye was upon him during this concluding conflict. She had roused herself from the state of stupefaction into which she had fallen; and even supported her poor boy in her arms, whilst the attendants vainly endeavored to force nourishment between his firmly clenched teeth: but it soon was ended. The child was dead; and the mother was carried in a lifeless state from the apartment.

Many were the hours that she remained nearly in a state of unconsciousness; and even when sense appeared again to have returned, she neither spoke nor wept. It was not until Mrs. Vernon brought to her bedside the two other little boys, that the ice-bolt which had fallen upon her heart seemed inclined to melt. A glance of one of the children who stood by her side brought the image of her lost Harry before her, in health and beauty, reflected in the countenance of his brother; and nature found relief in a violent burst of tears. She wept, indeed, long and

bitterly; and Mrs. Vernon mingled tears of the most sincere sympathy with those of the wretched mother; and like the good Samaritan, resolved not to leave her until she had "poured oil and wine" into the wounds of her heart. However, it was long ere there was any diminution of those paroxysms of frantic grief which succeeded the stupor into which she at first sank; and Mrs. Vernon, on finding how futile were all her endeavors to soothe her, almost despaired of being of service; for to those moments when she bewailed in the most heart-breaking and frenzied manner the misfortune which had befallen her, succeeded hours of sullen insensibility to everything around.

For some days after the death of the child, she refused to see her husband; and then, acting always on the excitement of the moment, she suddenly desired that he might be admitted into her presence.

Mr. St. John, from a long subjection to the dominion of fashion, had alike suffered his feelings and his dress to be ruled according to her decrees, and would have been perhaps as much shocked to have departed from the quiet coldness of manner prescribed as his plain gentlemanly toilette. Still he was by no means deficient in kindness of heart and good feeling, and from having ever been an indulgent and considerate husband, had really grown into the habit of the affection which his conduct seemed to evince. He had witnessed the wretchedness of his wife as she sat by the death-bed of the poor boy, and had felt that the pale neglected figure before him, called forth more tenderness from his heart, than the beautiful and splendidly attired being he had so gloried in calling his own. He now fain would have mingled his tears of anguish with hers, and he hovered near the door of the apartment which he was forbid to enter, with the tenderest solicitude. Touched by the hand of sorrow, the arrogance of prosperity, with the tastes which prosperity engenders, had vanished away. He had stood by the cold remains of his beautiful boy; not as the man of fashion—not as the influential county man—not as the hospitable entertainer of titled guests, but as the bereaved father, who felt how inadequate was every earthly distinction to save the heart from anguish in the evil day.

It was thus softened and subdued that Mr. St. John found himself in the darkened chamber of his wife. She was reclining upon a couch, which he immediately approached; and bending over it, kissed her pallid cheek, which rivalled in whiteness the lace frill of the cap she wore. She spoke not, but motioned that he should seat himself by her side. They were both for some minutes silent, but convulsive sighs which proceeded from the lips of Lady Florence, seemed to speak of violent and contending emotions. At length, to the dismay and astonishment of the afflicted husband, she suddenly rose, and prostrating herself at his feet, exclaimed, "St. John, you know not what a wretch kneels at your feet—forgive me—pardon your erring wife!" She then with a rapidity and vehemence of utterance resembling the ravings of delirium, poured forth the history of her love for Julian. She concealed no one circumstance—she extenuated in no way her conduct—but threw herself at once unreservedly upon his mercy and forbearance.

There was much of repentance and humility in this confession of Lady Florence, and as such it was to be approved; still, on further examination, we

might find that he was merely obeying the dictates of a morbid sensibility, which she mistook for a virtuous signification of her errors. She imagined, moreover, that she had removed her guilt—that she had atoned her offence, by thus acknowledging it;—but she had but a frail foundation for this idea. A moment's self-examination would have revealed a fallacy; and shown that her heart had still been led by an influence which she had never fully sought; for as yet she had not prostrated herself in true humility to the only mediating source from whence she could derive support and obtain forgiveness.

Lady Florence found more lenity in her husband than she merited. Unused to scenes or sentiments, he was agitated without well comprehending why, and deficient in that acute sense of right which examines motives as well as results, feelings as well as actions, he thought her sense of guilt an exaggerated and overwrought sentiment. His knowledge of a dissipated world so far befriended Lady Florence that he was aware the error of which she was now conscious, struck and humbled before him, would have been considered by half his acquaintance as a *folie*, a bagatelle. From what he could gather from her words, they proved Julian a very demure profligate, and his wife very nearly his victim; but still the evil was merely in contemplation, and Mr. St. John's views only embraced realities. He was, however, shocked at the moment, and scarcely knew whether to raise his wife from the position she still kept at his feet, or leave the room with the dignity of an injured husband. But as we have said before, his heart was softened. All was mourning and affliction without—from the self-accused Florence he would at least meet sympathy and gratitude; so following the impulses of the moment, he lifted her from the ground, and while he held her in a half embrace, promised full pardon on the conditions that she would never again meet willingly so dangerous and expert a seducer as he persisted in believing Julian; and that she should engage herself by a solemn vow to spend the next three years with him, in the seclusion of the Highlands, where he possessed an hereditary but long neglected estate.

Lady Florence promised every thing. The greater the sacrifice in the present excited state of her feelings, the more she appeared exalted in her own opinion. However, to close a subject upon which there is little satisfaction in dwelling, suffice it to say, that Lady Florence in a few weeks departed with her family for Scotland. And in the stillness and tranquillity of the country, surrounded by her children, and in the constant society of a confiding husband, gained greater peace of mind than the noise and tumult of the world ever afforded her.

CHAPTER XLIII.

"I stood here in my happy days, when you were not."

"And everything was fair."

"I stand now in my altered mood."

"And marvel what they were, that brought me here."

"There is a change come o'er the hills."

"A shadow o'er the sky—"

"The shadow is from my own heart;"

"The change in my own eye."

THE young Lord Clairville, after a rapid journey, taken as much to escape from himself, as from the presence of those whose society was now so irksome to him, found himself at length at Oakwood, the place which henceforth ought to form his sphere of

usefulness and of happiness. But how truly desolate did this lovely spot appear to him!—how fraught with associations which filled his mind with sadness and distraction. And as he roamed listlessly, and with the restlessness of one dissatisfied with himself, through the desolate apartments, each spot told a tale connected with those scenes of past happiness, contrasting painfully with the feelings which now filled his heart. The happy days of his youth all appeared before his imagination, as if in mockery of his present state, and busy, cruel memory conjured up scenes and forms which agitated him to a fearful extent.

He saw Evelyn as she was before misfortune had blighted her bloom; he remembered her happy, joyous countenance, her Hebe-like form as she glided through these very rooms, no thought of care obscuring for a moment her felicity, with trustful love, beaming from her bright eyes, all confidence, all happiness. And then her image as he had last seen it, fell like a dark cloud upon his imagination; so pale was she then, so dejected, so altered, but still so lovely! Yet he had even then deserted her. And now that he was free, when he could lay at her feet fortune, rank, and happiness, he was fettered, chained by a vow made in a moment of fatal passion, and had indeed rendered himself unworthy of her. The next in succession of these grim spectres of memory, he saw Herbert and his father, but not in love and friendship did they smile upon him; frowns were upon their brows, scorn and contempt were depicted upon their countenances, and he felt that he must be despised as weak and perjured. His steps were next directed to his father's rooms, and they presented images which softened and unmannered him. As his eyes rested upon objects which had been long so familiar to him, he could almost fancy that he saw the form of the venerable invalid still pressing the cushions of the sofa on which he used to recline. There stood his easy chair and footstool, and close to it was the low seat by its side, on which the kind Blanche was wont to sit and read to him for hours. The books from which he had derived so much solace were all scattered on the table; and the crutches upon which he essayed sometimes to walk rested against the wall. The latter years of the poor sufferer had been passed in misery and pain; but he had submitted patiently to the trial, and was now at rest. At this moment of darkness, Julian envied his dead father; and with all the world before him, felt at this period that there was no happiness left for him on earth. Inconstant in virtue, variable in his resolutions, soft and yielding in his nature, yet perverse and stubborn against opposition, he had been unable to guide himself through the slippery paths of a dangerous world; led by false lights to a precipice threatening ruin and destruction, life which should have offered him every joy, now appeared an insupportable calamity.

In vain did the attentive domestics strive to rouse their dear young Lord from the dejection into which he had fallen. The game-keeper talked of the preserves—the stud groom displayed the newly-broken colts—but all in vain; Julian seemed to have forgotten old tastes and pleasures, and only lived for sorrow and gloom.

The days passed heavily and wretchedly; but still he remained at Oakwood, waiting with nervous anxiety for the arrival of every post.

The newspapers had announced the death of

Lady Florence's poor child; but still he heard not from her. At times he felt inclined to reproach her with neglect and indifference; and had he sacrificed all his best hopes for this! Her love—her loveliness could alone repay him for all that he had renounced; and were they, too, to be withheld from him? At times he felt disposed to visit her at Marston, and demand the reason of this forgetfulness of his hopes and claims. But he quickly recollected that the captivating woman, whose charms and many thousand tendernesses had created a want and a void in his bosom, was now the mourning mother. At such a time did he dare approach her with the whispers of unhallowed passion? A still uncorrupted monitor within his breast, said, "No," and he sought rather to quell the criminal turbulence of his own feelings, than venture to do her wrong, by intruding his presence upon her griefs.

He was rewarded for even this trivial conquest over evil inclinations, by the additional self-control it lent him. Every hour that he passed away from the magic of the enchantress, diminished its power over his mind; and awaking gradually as from a bewildering dream, he began to see her conduct, with his own, in a truer light. A shuddering horror evinced his judgment of it.

The tranquillity of Oakwood, that abode of his happy and virtuous youth, assisted in working the happy change. It afforded him ample time for reflection. He looked around upon his broad domain—his beautiful possessions; and he remembered that his rank and station required from him duties and serious care, which ought to occupy his mind. He had indeed a place to fill up; he had acquired the power of making himself useful—of bestowing happiness. He was not like the tree in some remote wilderness, which scatters its blossoms to the winds, and bears its fruit uncultured by any human being. But on the contrary his destiny was a high one. Thrown into the crowded paths of life, he began to be aware that his every action was of importance; and would serve either as example or warning to many whose eyes were now upon him. Was he then to cast away the blessings which Providence had heaped upon him? Was he to live a life of infamy who was called upon to aid the cause of virtue, by the means and influence placed in his keeping? He felt that guilt in his person would be doubly accursed by the evil effect it might work on others; and he sought at once to shut from his memory the image of the lovely one who had lured him to his ruin, the unholy pleasures, and variety of refined enjoyments with which the deformity of their sin was to be adorned. All this was well. But then the questions arose in his bosom; was he not pledged—was he not bound—to take her to himself as much as if she had in reality quitted home and country for his sake? Would not the nonfulfilment of his vow—that cursed promise he had made—as much compromise his honor as any other evasion where his word was engaged? He felt it would; and when arrived at that point of the mental arguments which he constantly held with himself—he would strike his forehead in despair; and rushing forth into the open air as if his agonized feelings required space and breath, would walk for hours, seeking by corporeal exertion to quell the tumultuous conflict within his mind.

At length a letter arrived. The well-known hand caused his heart to beat with a violence which made

itself almost audible. He could scarcely summon strength and resolution to open it. His fate had reached its climax—his doom was sealed. At last, with a desperate effort, he tore open the important sheet, and read as follows:—

"The Almighty, in vengeance, has afflicted me: my child has been the sacrifice for my sin. With a heart pierced by agony and remorse, I have thrown myself upon the mercy of my husband. I go with him to-morrow to Scotland. It is there I am henceforth to draw out my miserable existence; it is there I must endeavor to forget you. O Julian! how I have loved you! But it is a sinful passion, and has drawn down upon my devoted head such a retribution! Julian, I have made a solemn vow never again to see you. Help me to keep it—for I am still weak—I still carry the venom in my heart. Farewell, Julian!—I bid you an eternal adieu! In the happiness, which a fearful insight into futurity tells me you will one day enjoy with the thrice blessed Evelyn, think of Florence—think of one who—Alas! alas!—still I sit—God bless you, Julian!"

The perusal of this letter conveyed to the heart of Julian feelings of a very mingled description. Tears—scalding tears, rested on his manly cheek, as he traced evidences of passion still existing—still consuming, and that, too, in defiance of the supposed judgments of offended Heaven. But it was him she loved—and he, at least, might look with lenity on her crime. The freedom he had gained, did not at the moment give that sense of satisfaction to his mind which he had once supposed it would. At first he thought, he had been too lightly resigned; and the pride of man was chafed at being thus cast off. A second reading showed that the renunciation had been imperatively called for; and not made without effort. "Poor Florence!" he sighed,

"Had we never loved so blindly—
Had we never loved so kindly,
Never met, or never parted—"

—He could not conclude the verse; and for the succeeding week, which he passed in solitude and gloom, was in fact the broken-hearted lover.

The adieus of the unfortunate Florence were read again and again; and, as, by a strange fatality, so often was the name and image of her unconscious rival brought before the mind of Julian. By degrees the happiness which the jealous apprehensions of the one anticipated he should some day enjoy with the other, became a favorite subject of his speculations. He felt, it is true, while thus indulging them, guilty of a heartless infidelity to Lady Florence; but still the thoughts of Evelyn would recur to his mind, bringing with them almost a sanctifying influence, and, at any rate, a tranquilizing one.

He thought of her in the sphere which she was so fitted to adorn: the mistress of his home—the guardian spirit which was to direct his future life. At Oakwood, how would she throw life and lustre over its halls! what gladness would she diffuse! what good would she communicate! And then, what joy to place her in so fair a home! Pleasure danced in his eyes whilst these ideas passed through his mind. What happy anticipations! what a life was promised him of felicity and virtue! But then again his brow grew dark; the image of the heart-broken woman he had loved interposed between these joyful prospects. Was he so soon to show the lightness of his vows—a cold forgetfulness of her and her misfortunes! It could not be. Her past devotion

called for consideration. He would spend a period of widowhood, ere she should learn that he had dared to be happy with another. He would travel, and at the end of a year or two, return to claim his cousin for his bride; while, through the good offices of Blanche, the kindly feelings which he knew existed for him, should be kept alive, and fanned into a warmer nature.

A letter from Lady de Cressy made some change in these satisfactory arrangements. It told him that Evelyn was ill and suffering; that deep dejection had taken possession of the once lively girl; that she spoke much and anxiously of his continued absence from their happy circle, from which there was now no power to withhold him; and that although she had never mentioned his neglect with reference to herself, Blanche fully believed his inattention and indifference was the secret cause of all her sorrow.

That day Julian passed in solitude, pacing with measured steps the marble length of Oakwood Hall: his night was fearfully disturbed and restless, but when his valet obeyed the summons of his unusually early bell, he was desired to order his travelling carriage and four horses to be at the door in less than two hours; and before a tardy April sun had well risen over the fir-crowned hills of Oakwood, Julian was on his road to Riversdale.

CHAPTER XLIV.

"Oh! weep for those, the weary'd, worn,
Dragged downward by some earthly tie,
By some vain hope—some vainer love,
Who loathe to live, yet fear to die."

On reaching the pretty village of Riversdale, Julian left his carriage, and proceeded immediately to the Abbey. He was ushered into the library, where he was soon joined by Captain Cecil and his son; and without waiting for any questions or remarks upon his sudden appearance, his story was at once and briefly told. With perfect and estimable frankness—for it was joined with deep contrition—he gave them the history of his entanglement with Lady Florence, and the interruption it had offered to his affection for Evelyn. He painted in glowing, but natural, colors, all that he had endured from anguish of mind during even the moment of most glaring infatuation—how he repented of his weakness, even when most enthralled—how galling he had found his chains. He was now free. The unhappy woman had herself given him his liberty. Avoiding all mention of the letter he had received from Blanche, he declared that he was now at the Abbey, not to throw himself upon the mercy of Evelyn—for he hoped her pure mind might never learn the history of his folly—but he came to supplicate for the forgiveness of her father—of her brother, whose feelings must have been outraged by his neglect of her for whom he had so long professed such deep, such fervent love. He had come to solicit Captain Cecil's permission to declare himself the suitor of his daughter, and to use his influence to remove any impression which his estrangement might have produced.

Julian told his story well; while such real good feeling showed itself in all his words—such deep affection for Evelyn—such horror of his own conduct, that Captain Cecil's heart was in a moment opened to one whom he had ever loved as a son. Indeed, he had arrived in so timely a moment, that his presence was most cordially welcomed by the poor father who, wretched at the constant and evident

misery of his daughter, joyfully hailed the arrival of him, whose ardent affection would, he believed, recall her to happiness.

To see his beloved child happy was Captain Cecil's first and dearest wish; and when he looked upon the handsome youth who stood before him, pleading his cause with all the manly eloquence of passion, although he attributed much of Evelyn's suffering to his inconsistent conduct, he still felt that he must forgive him—must rejoice at the prospect of her returning peace, and be glad that in one so deserving in many particulars, he saw the future husband of his treasured daughter.

Remembering how ill he had left her, and the fearful languor which her fainting fit had caused, Captain Cecil was most anxious again to see her, and himself communicate the intelligence which he guessed would prove a speedy restorative; he therefore hastened to rejoin her, telling Julian how much her fainting had alarmed them, and the state of weakness which that fainting betokened.

Julian suffered much pain at the corroboration of Blanche's history of Evelyn's illness, and the belief that he had been instrumental to her indisposition; and yet there was something of satisfaction in the proof it gave him of being dear to her, particularly as he had imagined at times that her affection for him was of too sisterly a character ever to expand into a much deeper feeling. In the midst of his folly, this idea had presented itself in the form of an excuse and solace, and then again as a curse; but now it was banished—both Captain Cecil and Herbert seemed to recognize in her sentiments for him the tenderest love. The thought brought a warm glow to his agitated heart.

"How long your father is in returning!" he at length said, tired of waiting, and of the desultory conversation they attempted to maintain. "Herbert, if you could feel the horrors of suspense I now endure, you would indeed pity me. Pray go, and ask whether I may now see Evelyn. I have suffered so much lately from the misery of excitement and uncertainty, that, in truth, I can no longer support it."

Herbert was about to comply with the request, when his father appeared. He was very pale, and in much agitation. He informed Julian that Evelyn was too ill to see any one, and that, in short, he had sent for the medical man.

Here indeed was a subject for distress; and Julian felt overwhelmed by the alarm which the anxious countenance of Captain Cecil betrayed.

Evelyn, though recovered from her second fainting fit, was suffering from a most pitiable state of nervous excitement; and her alarmed mother and the agitated Blanche hung over her, oppressed with painful anxiety.

On the arrival of the doctor, Blanche met him at the door, and in a few words mentioned her belief that agitation of mind was the cause of the invalid's present situation. He therefore administered a composing draught; and to Mrs. Cecil's satisfaction, declared his wish of remaining in the adjoining apartment until he should ascertain the result.

A deep sleep soon ensued, which in a measure reassured them; and leaving the slumbering Evelyn under the watchful care of her mother and Rachael, Blanche descended to the drawing room to Julian, who she learnt was there alone waiting for her.

She dreaded, yet desired the interview. She too

seen plainly, and with affright, that Evelyn certainly loved another; she wished, therefore, at once to remove the impression which her letter must have made. But this was a task most painful to her feelings; and how bitterly did she deplore the indiscretion, which, raising the hopes of Julian, would make him feel more keenly the sad reverse. She now foresaw misery in new shapes and forms for those she loved. She knew the warmth of Julian's attachment; which, though cooled for a time, was too deeply rooted in his very nature to be wholly eradicated, and now she saw him willing to sue humbly on his knees for the heart which never could be his.

Her kind disposition was indeed most painfully distressed. How was she to break to him the afflicting truth? How rob him of the happy belief she herself had created? Yet it must be done; and in tears, and with agitation almost equal to his own, she entered the apartment.

"My dear kind Blanche!" he exclaimed, as he enfolded her in an affectionate embrace, "tell me of Evelyn! tell me that she is better! O Blanche! do I deserve that she should suffer thus for me, worthless, infatuated wretch that I have been! But if a whole life passed in loving her will in any way compensate for the pain I have caused her, heaven knows I only wait her will to beg at her feet permission thus to devote myself! Through all my faults, Blanche, you know how her image has clung to my heart. Plead for me, dearest cousin!—let me too, see her! let me tell her of all my tender affection!"

"Julian," said Blanche, with a countenance at once sad and grave, "I grieve for you, bitterly, sincerely, and, alas! it is I who have added to your sorrows."

"Good God! Blanche, what do you mean? Is there any danger in her illness? Speak, Blanche, in mercy, speak!" Julian exclaimed, with a pallid countenance.

"There is no danger," Blanche replied, hesitatingly, "she only suffers from over-excited nerves. But, Julian, how will you learn that I have unintentionally deceived you? My poor dear Julian! how will you learn that the heart which you have come to claim, I fear Evelyn has no power to bestow."

Blanche looked at her cousin, and feared that with all her precaution she had still been too abrupt. She saw with terror how deeply he was affected by the increasing paleness of his features, and the trembling of his every limb. He tried to speak, but the words died away on his lips unuttered.

"Julian," she said, taking his hand affectionately, "you must have courage, and endeavor to bear with fortitude this blow. I have only just discovered poor Evelyn's secret, and I feel stunned by the surprise. But I regret to say she most assuredly loves another, therefore it would be unwise, it would be cruel, were I to offer you false hopes."

Julian covered his face with his hands, and deep groans burst from his breast.

"I have deserved all this," he exclaimed, "richly deserved it. However, the punishment is greater than I bear. Blanche, are you certain of what you have just told me? have I really no hope?"

"I fear none," said Blanche, mournfully, for it had long been her favorite wish that Evelyn should be the wife of Julian; she also felt bitterly for him who now sat the image of despair.

A painful pause ensued; at length Julian started

up, and approaching Blanche, said in a low agitated tone, "Then I have no longer any business here, I shall go."

"Not yet; pray, Julian, wait at least until this evening, and then perhaps I may learn more upon this painful subject," said Blanche, seeking to detain him.

A servant entered the apartment at this moment to tell Blanche that Miss Cecil was inquiring for her. Before leaving him she exacted from Julian the promise that he would not quit the Abbey until she had again seen him. He mournfully consented to her wishes, and she hastened to the sick room.

CHAPTER XLV.

"Long, long in sorrow too deep for repining,
Gloomy but tranquil thus bosom hath lain;
And joy coming now, like a sudden light shining,
O'er eyelids long darken'd, would bring me but pain."

The Duke of Strathaven was seated in his library, surrounded by papers evidently full of great and important affairs. He had been giving audiences the whole morning, and his secretaries had just left him to complete the despatches which had been occupying his attention. His brow was clouded, and he looked unhappy as well as harassed. At length alone, he appeared to put aside business; and shading his face with his hand, sighed deeply, as thoughts of a very different nature from the affairs which had previously engrossed his attention passed through his mind.

He had that day learned from Dr. T——, who had been with him to solicit some appointment for a nephew, that on the previous morning he had been sent for express to Riversdale Abbey to see the eldest Miss Cecil, whose nerves were in so highly an excitable condition as rather to baffle the skill of the village apothecary, and much alarm the whole family. "However, I did not find much the matter," continued the good physician; "there was certainly much excitement, some disposition to hysteria, and an uncomfortable degree of languor; but those who know the Cecil family as well as your grace and myself, could have accounted for a good deal of the dear child's indisposition as I did, on meeting the travelling equipage of the young Lord Clairville just leaving the Abbey gates."

The Duke felt that he should have put the same construction on Evelyn's illness as Dr. T——, but he forbore all comment. However, the picture which rose in his mind of the happy Julian quitting in triumph the Abbey, with his vows accepted, his love returned by the tender girl who was even now suffering from the emotion such circumstances would naturally create, was anything but cheering to one who loved devotedly, though hopelessly, as did the Duke; and the image gave rise to that despondency which his first solitary moment still further confirmed.

He felt that all was over; that even the faint gleam of happiness which he had in some degree encouraged, was now totally extinguished. But this was not all; he was sensible that the strength of mind which had been his support in many a scene of difficulty, had been weakened by the softer emotions in which he had suffered himself to indulge,—that the very spring of life, of action, was stopped; in short, that he was unmanned and degraded in his own opinion. "Shame, shame," he muttered, "shame upon this beating heart! shame for the dotard thus to act the boy!" But it was in vain that he thus

looked himself in vain that he reproached himself for having in a sense "fallen from his high estate."

The poison was in his veins; and in spite of his best efforts the gentle form of Evelyn would intrude itself upon his fancy, with all the sweetness, all the enchanting softness which had so enthralled him. The recollection of that winning tenderness which had sometimes marked her manners to himself, when conversation had in a measure banished the constraint she appeared too often to experience in his presence, now came still farther to distract him. He reflected that there was a time when, sinking under the weight of poverty and sorrow, he might perchance have won her hand. He might have offered her wealth, rank, the most perfect devotion, happiness for her family; in short all that was desirable in life, at a moment when Julian was far away, and he her only stay, her only assistance; perchance he might have bought her! Could he have been then resisted? The question was an insidious one, and brought a tide of regrets and warm emotions to his heart. He felt that he might have gained her! "But no, no, God forbade it! I did not, I left her for her young lover," he exclaimed, as, rising from his chair, he paced the chamber with hurried steps.

At this moment the groom of the chambers announced a visitor. The Duke started and endeavored to smooth his ruffled brow, for that visitor was the young Lord Clairville, under the knowledge of whose supposed happiness she was at the very moment writhing. But Julian stood before him, not as the proud, the happy lover which his imagination had pictured; but with a countenance so haggard, with an expression of grief so marked, that the Duke, although his heart a moment ago was shut against him with a feeling of jealousy which even his exalted nature could not shake off, could not but feel instant compassion mingled with surprise at his sad appearance.

They were both silent for a few moments after the first salutation. At length Julian spoke, but his voice trembled, and he could scarcely command himself to utter the words which faltered on his lips.

"You have ever been a kind friend to me, the benefactor of those belonging to me. I now come to entreat one further act of friendship. Your Grace, I hear, is going to India. May I implore you to take me out with you? You look incredulous, surprised, but I am in earnest. I must leave this country, and it must be for some decided purpose. I beseech your Grace to confer this favor upon me. Let me be your secretary, let me live in your presence. From your great mind I may learn to bear the griefs which now oppress my heart."

"Clairville, you perfectly surprise, bewilder me. What do you mean? What is the reason of this extraordinary proposal? A man of your fortune, your rank! Are you mad, raving, with all the happiness that is within your reach?" Here the Duke's voice faltered, and hastily rising from his seat, he walked towards the window.

"Happiness!" sighed Julian, "there is none under the sun for me! I am a wretched, miserable, rejected creature. I have brought it all upon myself. Had I seen at my post, had I watched over her, comforted her in her hour of trial, this might not have been. Duke," said he, turning towards him, for he was now leaning his elbow upon the mantel-piece, with his face averted, "tell me one thing. You were kind to my cousins, oh! how kind in their time of distress.

You were often with them, and probably may be able to satisfy me on one point. Who is it that has robbed me of the affections of my Evelyn?"

The Duke started perceptibly; and had Julian's agitation not blinded him, he might at once have perceived that the deadly paleness which overspread the countenance of his companion, denoted emotion quite equal to his own. However, Julian saved him for a time from the pain of answering, by continuing vehemently—

"But your Grace shall hear my story, and why I know that I have a rival. Freeing myself from a thralldom which I had suffered too long to hold dominion over me, hearing from Blanche de Cressy her belief of Evelyn's grief at my absence, I flew to tell her how I had loved her through all my follies, that her image had never faded from my mind."

"Well," said the Duke, with breathless impatience, as Julian paused.

"Well," continued Julian, recalling himself from a chain of thought which had interrupted his recital. "I arrived at Oakwood—I was received kindly by my uncle—joyfully I may say. He told me that Evelyn was ill, but hoped that my presence would lead to her recovery. There was much of happiness in these words; and my inward soul was prostrate with gratitude at my release from insatiation, and my return to pure virtuous joy, which alone is unalloyed. This happiness was soon over. Blanche was the messenger of anguish. She told me she felt assured that Evelyn loved another. I would not, I could not wholly believe this, and after a time I sought an interview with her. Although frantic with sorrow and disappointment at the intelligence Blanche had given me, I still affected disbelief, and declared I would take my dismissal from no lips but hers. This was selfish—cruel; but still my feelings were wrought to that pitch of agony, I felt that I must die unless I saw her once more."

The agitation of the Duke was visibly increasing, as he stood with his eyes riveted upon Julian, breathless and transfixed. He heeded it not, but continued—

"Sweet, lovely Evelyn! I saw her at last, and her pale altered countenance can never be obliterated from my recollection. She was reclining on a sofa when I entered. I threw myself on my knees before her;—I humbled myself to the dust—I implored her to have mercy. She wept bitterly—she accused herself of cruelty in having suffered me to misconstrue sentiments which were ever those of a sister. She besought me to pardon her, and to love her but as a cousin; for that there was an insurmountable obstacle to her ever considering me in any other light,—in short, she completely divested me of every particle of hope. I saw it was useless to linger—painful as my presence evidently was to her feelings—and pressing one long, lingering kiss on her pallid brow, I tore myself away. And now," continued Julian, affecting a lightness of manner which contrasted strongly with his trembling lips and tearful eyes, "I think I have made out to your Grace as strong a claim to scorching beneath an Indian sun as misery and perfect hopelessness of heart ever gave. Yes," added the still impetuous youth, "I must go; far, far, from this hated country—from those I love; and as wave after wave bears me from an atmosphere tainted with unhappiness, I may be able once more to exist without this agony which pervades every nerve of my frame."

The Duke still forbore to answer. He was rapidly pacing the apartment; his disordered steps and agitated countenance reflecting too truly the emotions which filled the heart of his young friend. At length he paused, and with a voice hoarse from the conflict within, said, "Clairville, I will consider what you have requested. But I must pray you leave me now. I am not in a state for conversation—I am ill—what you have told me has moved my very soul—come to me again to-morrow," and with these words he almost opened the door himself for Julian; and when he had departed, he turned the lock, and throwing himself into a chair, he pressed his forehead with a violence, and a degree of mental agony which appeared to seek relief by actual bodily pain.

He was, indeed, in a state of bewildered and distracted feeling, agitated by a thousand hopes and fears. That one formidable rival was removed was certain; but was there no other to be dreaded? He paused; he remembered the seclusion in which Evelyn had lately passed her days; he called to mind her innocence and ingenuous character, and while he deemed it scarcely possible she should have formed any attachment previous to the period of their misfortunes, the warm glow of hope filled his heart; but then again it faded away leaving him more depressed than before. What was to be done? This state of uncertainty was worse—was infinitely more distracting than the antecedent despair. He was interrupted in a train of perplexing and gloomy ideas by repeated knocks at the door. The secretaries were waiting with letters of importance; visitors upon business were announced; affairs of consequence crowded upon him; but it was observed by all that the Duke was in a most extraordinary state of abstraction. His friends looked upon him with surprise and sorrow, his enemies with malicious gratification. The great mind appeared to be giving way; the noble lion at length hampered and perplexed by some unseen toils. Little did those who saw him thus, imagine how delicate and weak a hand could alone extricate this exalted man from the difficulties that were pressing upon his heart, and that one smile—one little word, would at once restore him to his former self.

At about seven o'clock on the ensuing morning the travelling carriage of the Duke of Strathdale was to be seen at his door, and the owner soon after stepped into it. After a night of agonizing deliberation, he had determined to go down to Riversdale Abbey, and endeavor to gain from Blanche some insight into the true state of the case. He felt that, until his mind was assured upon the subject, he could never tranquilize his feelings or keep up appearances to the world. If he found that all hope was excluded for him, he must endeavor by that firmness of purpose which had carried him through life, to overcome a feeling which was now literally consuming him. He would then go to India; and devoting the remaining energies of his mind to the difficult and complicated affairs of its government, either recover the tone of spirit which had now forsaken him, or die.

CHAPTER XLVL

"I have no bloom of laughing youth

My offering to be;

I only bring my earnest truth—

My glowing heart to thee."

"EVELYN," said Blanche de Cressy, "let us go and spend the morning in the arbor near the old

cloisters. We will take our books, and work, and also the guitar. We shall have fresh air all the morning without fatigue, which Dr. T—— says will soon restore you, dearest. But I still think you require a great deal of nursing and care to bring back the roses to those pale cheeks. Come, let us go," she said gaily to the languid girl, who sighed as she tried to smile acquiescence. And assisted by Herbert, they collected all the material for their morning's amusement, and were soon seated in the sunny bower which was their most favored spot.

Herbert soon left them with his fishing-rod, promising to content himself with small spoil, and to return and read aloud to them.

There was a long pause after he left them. Both had a subject near their hearts, yet both were averse to speak upon it. At length, Evelyn, with an effort that caused her trembling hands to break the slender thread of her *broderie*, said with a deep low tone of sadness, "Blanche, I do not think you have loved me quite so much since I have been the involuntary cause of poor Julian's vexation. You look strange—you look coldly on me. And yet, Blanche, did you know all, you would feel that I could only have acted as I have done." As Evelyn faltered out these last words, she cast a timid imploring glance on Blanche, which seemed to ask for confidence in the propriety of her conduct, without exacting her reasons for it. However, the look was unobserved by Blanche, who, bending over her tent-stitch Troubadour with more than usual intensity, said with a little *tuang* of anger in her tone, "Not knowing all, Evelyn, I cannot give an opinion on a subject upon which I am so utterly ignorant. You have never intrusted me with the reasons for your rejection of Julian, therefore I am too much in the dark to hazard any conjecture on its propriety. To tell you the truth," Blanche continued, gravely, "and you know I never disguise it, Evelyn, you have disappointed me; and though you must be ever dear to my heart, as the friend of my childhood—the sister of Herbert, still I have found to my sorrow, that you, to whom I have confided every thought of my bosom—you who I considered open and candid as the face of day, and who I thought equally with myself would have shrunk from a concealment which implies want of affection and trust; still, Evelyn, I am sorrowfully convinced that you are keeping from me some secret feeling."

Blanche had proceeded thus far, and was uttering merely the reproaches of one who had felt her affection injured by the want of candor, of which she complained. But it struck her, that, having made this commencement, it was now the moment to probe still further the morbid state of feeling into which poor Evelyn had fallen. Therefore, proceeding with more harshness than was natural to her, she said, "Evelyn, does it ever occur to you that you are deeply paining the hearts of all those who love you so well, by a conduct so strange, so reserved?"

Tears fell slowly from Evelyn's eyes, but she made no answer. Blanche's excellent perception at once saw that this was the moment to force the entire confidence of her cousin, by which alone she would be enabled to offer the advice and sympathy so necessary in her present difficulties. Therefore, though dreading what might be the effect of her finding that her secret was suspected, she said with earnestness, "Evelyn, tell me—confess at once; is it the Duke of Strathdale whom you

love—is it for him that you rejected the love of poor Julian?"

Evelyn threw herself on her knees before her cousin, and buried her face on her lap. Sobs heaved from her bosom; but still she spoke not—moved not. Blanche was much distressed; and bending over her, said affectionately, "Evelyn, be not thus agitated. It is for your own sake that I have been thus abrupt. I wish to assist you—to endeavor to make you happier."

Whilst she was thus speaking, she thought she heard a quick step, as of some one approaching; while the voices of her little cousins were heard in gay chat with some other person.

"Get up, dear Evelyn," she said quickly "there is somebody coming. Do not let yourself be seen thus;" but Evelyn heard not the words of Blanche, but continued kneeling and sobbing as if her heart would break, until she heard her cousin say, with almost a scream of surprise, "Good heavens! the Duke!"

Then indeed, did Evelyn start up; but it was again to hide her face upon the bosom of her cousin, who had risen at the entrance of their illustrious visitor.

"Lady de Cressy—Miss Cecil! Good God!—what is the matter; why do I find you thus?" said the Duke, with earnest anxiety; at the same time taking the cold passive hand of poor Evelyn.

Blanche, who was herself very pale, and in almost as much trepidation as either of her companions, still saw, by a glance, that there was enough in the Duke's manner to disperse all fears for the lost heart of Evelyn; and "jumping at the conclusion" that Julian's dejection had brought him hither, thought she could not better assist the *dénouement* which must now take place, than by withdrawing; so disengaging herself from the poor confused girl, who still clung to her, she said, "Evelyn is very unhappy, and has something very dreadful on her mind which she will reveal to no one. Your Grace, I really believe, is the only person to whom she will confide her secret. Come, Laura, come, Lucy," she added, an arch smile playing on her lips, "Evelyn has something to say to his Grace;" and so saying she hastily left the arbor, accompanied by the two little girls.

Though claiming the full extent of an author's privilege, that of hearing and seeing everything, still the particulars of the scene which ensued never transpired. Suffice it to say, that the secrets of two hearts were then revealed, which had suffered most poignantly from the preceding concealment; that one short hour was adequate to the transformation of the melancholy drooping Evelyn, to the happy, blushing girl, who almost doubted even now of her happiness; while it rendered to the good, the great Strathhaven the exquisite bliss of finding that he was beloved—servently, disinterestedly, beloved, by a being fair and good, as an angel's dream. His life had been one of toil—of feverish ambition; unblessed by domestic joys, and all those sweet affections which gladden human existence. Now all was to be changed. Adieu to politics, to court exactions, to all the intrigues of diplomacy. His heart had at length found its resting-place; and he who had hitherto lived for others, might now begin to live for himself, and all the happiness held out to him.

A life—possessing such attractions to those concerned, that they could have willed its duration

for many hours, was at length interrupted by the entrance of Herbert into the arbor, holding a large pike in his hand, the produce of his fishing labors. His surprise was great when he beheld the Duke; but some few hints from Blanche had rendered the understanding which appeared to exist between Evelyn and his Grace, not so perfectly incomprehensible as it would otherwise have been. So that when the Duke, with a countenance beaming with chastened happiness, taking his hand said, "Mr. Cecil, I hope that we have your good wishes for gaining the consent of Captain Cecil, that I may rob you of your sweet Evelyn,—she sanctions my application," he was enabled to offer his congratulations and expressions of pleasure with a warmth most gratifying to the Duke and his blushing Evelyn.

That day was one of mingled feelings for the happy party at Riversdale. Joy and wonder by turns prevailed as each particular became known; and the unexpected truth imparted to the agitated parents, that their distinguished benefactor—his country's idol—the hero—the statesman—the illustrious Strathhaven, was in fact the tender lover of their daughter, who so fervently returned his passion.

It was indeed an eventful day; for the Duke not only had asked for the hand of the fair Evelyn, but he had pleaded, and not in vain, that an early day might be fixed for their nuptials.

Captain Cecil was shortly to set sail for the Mediterranean; his return would be uncertain; and could he leave his family under better protection than the husband of his daughter? This was the plea urged, and admitted. Besides, Evelyn must have his support at the altar. The loved hand of her own dear father must alone give her up to her husband.

How Evelyn's scruples against all this haste were set aside, we know not. All that we can say upon the subject is, that lawyers were to be hurried, a host of milliners and dress-makers put into requisition, and the wedding fixed for that day three weeks.

The Duke, in the mean time, had business in London. He had to unwind the last chains of diplomatic life; and, as he sent in his resignation of governor-general of India, he blessed his fate which had reserved for him the affections of one, whose parting whisper besought him to give up all the splendors and importance of public life, and resign himself henceforth wholly to the society of a wife, who would think every hour lost which separated her from him.

CHAPTER XLVII.

"Thou dost in thy passages of life,
Make me believe that thou art only mark'd
For the hot vengeance and the rod of heaven."

—else,
Could such inordinate and low desires,
Such barren pleasures—rude society
Accompany the greatness of thy blood?"

Among the many branches of his family to whom the Duke of Strathhaven had to announce his intended marriage, was the Lord Fitz-Henry, but for some latent reason he felt more averse to making the communication to him than to any other. It might have been the idea which most parents entertain, that a second marriage is displeasing to the children of the first; but so it was; and the Duke experienced a sensation of regret on learning that his son was in town, and proposed paying his re-

spects to him on the occasion. Hitherto, their meetings had been "few and far between;" consisting of accidental encounters in some brilliant assembly; or else, when Fitz-Henry was, to use his own phrase, "hard up," and he made a financial visit to one who, in spite of the little sympathy existing between them, scarcely refused him anything.

When the Duke found himself alone with his son, he was silent for some minutes; and a slight flush passed over his countenance as he said, "Fitz-Henry, I am going to be married in less than a fortnight."

"The devil you are sir!" replied Fitz-Henry, much surprised, and reflecting that henceforth *post obit* would not be so easily arranged as the one which had been executed that very morning. "But I beg your Grace's pardon," he continued, "for using such a word, and upon such an occasion; but the news was sudden for a spendthrift like myself. However, I wish you joy, and think you infernally in the right. You have only one son, and he may perchance soon cease to be your heir—at least so Halford says, and accounts for, by that cursed Curacao which I have taken to drink lately, to get an appetite for breakfast. It is quite time some new specimens of the right noble Fitz-Henrys should be introduced into society; I'll teach them to hunt. But pray, who is the fair lady who I am to call mamma?"

The Duke smiled. He thought of the young being who was thus to be apostrophised, and replied: "It is Miss Cecil, the daughter of Captain Cecil, and a niece of Lady Clairville."

"And sister, is she not to those little fairies I found here one morning?" inquired Fitz-Henry, assured that the Duchess-elect was the Kensington divinity; and he was for a moment silent, from a feeling somewhat approaching to regret. He then added, "Of course your grace will present me to my lady mother; I am curious to see one whose pretty face it is, I suppose, that has made this change in the administration; and who, moreover, has distanced those three titled goddesses who have long been grasping at your Dukedom, with as much eagerness as ever the golden apple was of yore."

"Miss Cecil is not in town," the Duke answered quietly.

"But of course, sir, you intend to invite me to the ceremony!" continued Fitz-Henry, not easily rebuffed.

"It rests with Captain and Mrs. Cecil to ask whom they will; but if you are so very anxious, Fitz-Henry, I think my interest may insure you an invitation. But I now wish to talk to you of more serious things," continued the Duke, drawing near to his writing-table, and filling up a check for five thousand pounds. "Here is a wedding present for you; and with it, as usual, I conceive myself at liberty to give you a lecture." Fitz-Henry said nothing; but wondering whether it would be as much longer as the donation was more liberal than preceding ones, composed himself to attend to what he termed "the governor's attempts at animal magnetism."

The Duke had too long found the utter impossibility of effecting by his representations any change in his son's habits for him to have a great deal to say upon that head at present. The last time that

he had attempted to inculcate reform, Fitz-Henry had told him with much levity not to trouble himself *en bon pere* in improving his morals, as he conceived that his own age and independence rendered him accountable to no one, while it removed all responsibility from the shoulders of his Grace.

However conducive to somnambulism the Duke's lectures had hitherto been, his present words were of a more exciting nature. Fitz-Henry, when he took the extended hand of his father at parting, was really apparently affected; and as he descended the steps of Strathhaven House, acknowledged within himself that he was indeed a shattered worthless *roué*. Even Villars, the only one professing respectability of his acquaintance, was showing a system of reformation, previous to his marriage, by gently cutting him. "*Ed to anche sono pittore*" that is to say—I, too, will be married," muttered Fitz-Henry, as he entered the drawing-room of the pretty *ternie* de Meranville, who was industriously winding a skein of netting-silk, thrown over the dumpy fingers of Theophilus Rushford, Esq., the rich heir of some doughty stockbroker, dead some two years' back, and who left him every thing but the requisites for a man of fashion; which character, unfortunately, was the only one that he ambitioned.

Removing the skein of silk from his fingers, with much coolness and more rudeness, Fitz-Henry soon drove the rosy-cheeked *millionnaire* from the apartment, who felt that he could stand effrontery of any kind but that of a nobleman. He was no sooner gone, that Fitz-Henry, throwing himself on the sofa by the side of the somewhat irritated Jennie, commenced his first step towards retrieving his evil ways, and said, "Jennie, *ma petite reine*, the governor is going to be married; suppose you and I follow so noble an example. Will you marry me, Jennie, and become a *miladi* and an honest woman? here's a check for five thousand. We'll pass our honeymoon at Vienna, and you shall have your diamonds fresh set—the money will just serve our turn. Come, Jennie, will you not blush a kind consent?"

Jennie did blush; but it was with the earnestness by which she sought to turn Fitz-Henry from this *folie*, as she termed his new-formed wishes. They would have interfered most direfully with her present views; she saw the health of *ce cher Fiché-Henri* fast failing—she knew that his finances had failed long since; with no very great vocation for the empty title held out to her, she thought more seriously than ever of certain propositions made by Mr. Rushford, whose cherry cheeks and staring blue eyes rendered him *un véritable amour* in her estimation. Jennie was not one to be long at coming to a decision; she soothed a great deal of the perturbation evident in the manner of Fitz-Henry; and temporizing rather than opposing his wishes, she sent him forth in search of his friend Villars; while, by the aid of her maid, the infallible Mademoiselle Victorine, she arranged matters so well, that in a week from that day, Theophilus Rushford, Esquire, was to be seen by the admiring Parisians, driving a smart yellow telegraph in the Bois de Boulogne, with the splendidly-dressed Jennie inside—his newly wedded wife.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

Tears on thy bridal morning! Tears, my love!
It ought not thus to be. Come, sweetest, come!
The holy vow shall tremble on thy lip,
And at God's blessed altar shalt thou kneel,
So meek and beautiful, that men will deem
Some angel there doth pray."

The day appointed for the marriage of the Duke of Strathhaven at length arrived, and Nature herself appeared to take part in the rejoicings of that bright May day, and shed further gladness over the scene which presented itself at Riversdale. The old Abbey, with the rays of the sun shining brightly on its painted windows and their Gothic framework, seemed to divest itself of its gloom; while the sparkling river, as it glided swiftly by, with its bosom adorned with pleasure-boats, from which were streaming the brightest colors, added to the animation of the scene. There was a joyful bustle throughout the village, and in every cottage a toilet was going forward that all might be smart and neat to salute the wedding cortege as it passed on its way to the church.

Neither did the interior of the Abbey present much tranquillity while feelings of a varied nature throbbed in the bosoms of its inhabitants; and although this was a proud, a joyful day to the parents, it was also one of anxiety and agitation only known to the heart of a father or mother.

Captain Cecil was very pale, very nervous; for beneath the exterior of a manly bearing, his heart was opened to every tender feeling. He had that day to relinquish his own, his most darling child, into the hands of another; and though that other was the good, the perfect Strathhaven, still his heart sunk with dread when he reflected that she, the dear one just entering life, so young, so fair, would have to encounter all the perils of exalted rank, the temptations of boundless wealth, far from his and her mother's watchful eye.

"Heaven grant that she may pass through the ordeal of prosperity, as pure, as unspoilt as the attacks of misfortune have left her!" was the fervent prayer aspirated by the doting father.

Evelyn passed the morning in her own room pensive and grave. The Duke would only arrive in time for the ceremony, which was to take place in the church, at the request of the simple and heavenly-minded bride, who felt that the holiness of the place would lend a further sanctity to the marriage vow.

She thought of the approaching parting from her father and mother, and tears fell from her eyes in spite of her bright anticipations of happiness.

"Evelyn," said Edwin, who was sitting close to his sister, with his eyes affectionately fixed upon her countenance and his arm around her neck, "I do not like to see you cry, pray dry your tears. What will the Duke think if he sees them? Don't you love him dearly, Evelyn?"

"Indeed I do," said Evelyn, hastily wiping her eyes, "and no signs of grief should dim the eye of the bride of such a man."

"Oh no! And besides, Evelyn, I have a beautiful wedding present to make you," Edwin replied with a voice evincing some agitation, while taking from his pocket a small morocco case, which he presented to his sister. It contained an ornament in the form of a dove in brilliants, bearing in its mouth a branch formed of emeralds. Evelyn examined it with admiration and surprise.

"Shall I tell you the history of the dove?" asked

Edwin, delighted with the sensation it produced. "When the Duke was here last, I told him that I wished to make you a present, and that I had a sovereign and six shillings. He asked me what I should like it to be, and I said something to remind you of his kindness to us, and that I had read that a dove with an olive branch in its mouth was the emblem of consolation."

"And what did the Duke say?" inquired Evelyn, much interested.

"Oh, he held me to his bosom, and said that he loved me almost as much as he does you, Miss Evelyn; and he told me he would get my present from his jeweller's; and when I offered him the money, he said that I should pay him when he came back. Last night Herbert gave me a parcel containing this beautiful brooch. Was it not kind of the dear, dear Duke, to do my commission so well?"

The tears which Evelyn had dried, now again flowed; but they were the outpourings of joy and tenderness.

The moments passed on, and at length the sounds of carriages were heard arriving at the Abbey. The bridal party was soon assembled. The Duke had pressed his adored Evelyn to his devoted bosom, who, descending to her group of expecting bridesmaids with a countenance radiant with joy and loveliness, was greeted by all around with admiring and ardent affection.

She was splendidly attired as though to do honor to the illustrious name she was about to take; and the sumptuous veil which fell over her face and person rather adorned than concealed their beauty. One ornament alone sparkled on her bosom,—it was Edwin's gift, the "dove of consolation."

The Duke looked the personification of all that was noble and manly; happiness had lent a lustre to his eye, and a bright flush to his cheek; and our youngest and most fastidious reader need not lament over the disparity of age of the newly-wedded pair; for on looking round on the young men who surrounded the altar, none could be compared to the dignified and handsome Strathhaven.

The wedding was over, and the youthful Duchess, as she was pressed to the hearts of her weeping parents, found there was still to be sorrow with her joy. But it was but a transient cloud; their separation was not to be of long duration; and ere the carriage had driven beyond the smiling woods of Riversdale, the Duke had the happiness of seeing that Evelyn had recovered all that sweet composure which usually marked her manners.

There were two who, though of such near kindred to the wedded pair, had not assisted at the nuptial feast. Fitz-Henry's presence had been requested with that of others of the Duke's relations, but the abduction of the pretty Jennie had left him neither time nor inclination for wedding festivities. Lord Clairville, from motives of delicacy, had not been bidden to the Abbey; though a letter from Blanche had softened the omission to the utmost of her power, and bore the affectionate regards of those who deeply regretted his absence.

However, the unhappy Julian was far from Riversdale at the period of the marriage which time crushed his every hope. In the agony of the first moment, when he learned the truth of the purport which had before reached his ear, of the approaching union of the Duke of Strathhaven with the still lo-

loved Evelyn, he wrote a letter full of angry feeling to his mother. He told her that his happiness was entirely destroyed, and that he considered she was the cause of the blight which had fallen over him. He added, that he felt that it was impossible to meet her whilst the impression lasted; that it was her constant opposition to his affection for Evelyn which was the origin of his present misery; that he was therefore going abroad, intending to be absent from England for many years.

Lady Clairville experienced to a fearful extent the punishment which her pride and cold-hearted conduct had brought down upon her head. The only being on earth for whom she felt any kindly affection was her son, and he spurned and avoided her. She, too, had received the announcement of the approaching marriage of Evelyn—the Evelyn she had despised—to the great and powerful Duke of Strathhaven; and it left the scorpion sting of impotent envy in her heart. It had also enabled her in a measure to anticipate these evidences of Julian's anger, and she trembled with fear when she reflected upon the impetuous nature of his feelings. Still the darkest of her expectations never led her to expect the utter desolation in which it appeared he meant to leave her; neither could she have imagined that he would thus doom himself to wander hopeless and alone, far from all who knew or valued him. Frantic with agonizing apprehensions, pride and self-love gave way to the force of natural affections. She ordered her carriage, and drove rapidly to his house. She was humbled by the bitterness of her disappointments, and would fain have cast herself on her knees before the heart-broken man, and in terms the most touching have besought him not to abandon her. But what a shock was it to hear when she reached the house, that Lord Clairville had left London a few hours before, for Dover, where he intended to embark for the continent. This was indeed true. Julian, with a heart heavy with griefs—shrinking with horror from meeting any who had known him in his happiness—particularly the mother who had labored so for his undoing—smarting under the sense of disappointment, which was rendered still more poignant by the idea that it was caused by the neglect of a treasure which ought to have been guarded with never-ceasing affection, and not abandoned to be found and cherished by another—had already commenced his self-inflicted exile. Little caring whither he went, his only idea for the present was, that he should never again see his native land; and with harrowing sensations of regret and self-reproach, mingled with feelings towards his mother of which he could not divest himself, even while he condemned them, he found himself rapidly whirled to Dover, from which place he embarked by the first packet that was to quit the harbor.

The first impulse of Lady Clairville, on learning the departure of her son, was to order four post-horses and to follow him immediately. She heeded not the difficulty of any suitable preparations being made. Her passport was the only thing she was anxious about; fearing Julian might have embarked ere she overtook him, and that being procured, she would suffer her attendants to make no farther delay.

On reaching Dover, Lady Clairville found that what she had dreaded had actually occurred, and on making inquiries at the hotel, learned that a gen-

tleman, young and of a dark complexion, in a carriage with a small coronet on the panels, had arrived a few hours before herself, and about half an hour since had sailed for Calais.

There was nothing for her to do but wait until the next packet should leave for France, and the next morning at an early hour Lady Clairville found herself again in active pursuit of her son, whose return she was determined to effect by every means within her power. Arrived at Calais, she met some little difficulty. So many *milords* had arrived the preceding day, she could scarcely ascertain who among the many was her son. A busy chattering waiter at the hotel at which she stopped, came to her assistance, and when describing the visitors of the day before, one among them was represented with "*nez aquilin—yeux gris—menton ronde—cheveux noirs—taille grande*;" and above all, when mention was made of the green post chariot, with a small silver coronet—the valet who dispersed money *en vrai monseigneur*, but yet was so *amiable* he had taken the waiter's disinterested recommendation of an hotel at Paris, she felt convinced she was again in the track of her son.

Resting but little on the journey, Lady Clairville at length found herself at Paris, and under the *porte-cochere* of the Hotel de Mirabeau. The same inquiries were again made, but there was an air of such consternation and hurry in the manners of all who made a show of attending to them, that at last, becoming impatient, she begged the proprietor of the hotel might be sent for. He came; but his face was pale and his hands trembling. He seemed perfectly to understand her questions and descriptions, and informed her that the gentleman was undoubtedly in the house. "But," said the man, "*madame* must prepare herself for the worst: he is certainly dying."

A faint scream burst from the lips of the affrighted mother, and quickly following the steps of the agitated Frenchman to a room on the *rez de chaussee*, she beheld the bleeding figure of a young man extended on a couch. Her trembling limbs could scarcely bear her to his side, and sinking on her knees before him, she gazed with anguish upon his countenance, but beheld—not the features of her son—but met the dying glance of the young Lord Fitz-Henry.

It was indeed he. The pistols of Mr. Rushford had done their work; and dying, as he had lived, the slave of selfish impulse, with one deep convulsive sigh, the soul of the misguided Fitz-Henry fled its mortal sphere, leaving one further example of the devastating nature of human passion uncontrolled by virtue or religion.

Lady Clairville left the dreadful scene with shuddering horror, feeling perfectly unequal to the task of prosecuting her search for Julian, which was indeed rendered more difficult from having so completely lost all traces of him. She still, however, lingered in Paris; for, ignorant that Julian, altering his first plans, had embarked from Dover in a large fishing-smack bound for Ostend, intending to proceed to the north of Europe, she imagined it was yet probable that she might meet him in France.

The tragical death of Lord Fitz-Henry, added to the fatigues she had undergone, had given a shock to her nerves which rendered rest essential to her; she therefore directed that the remainder of her establishment should join her in Paris. There was

some satisfaction in feeling thus removed from all those who had witnessed the overthrow of her schemes: and although the happiness that the Lady de Cressy was enjoying, with her friends ranked in her heart, still that was preferable to the irksomeness she would suffer in her presence, and which induced her still to defer recalling her to her protection.

A severe attack of spasms followed the different emotions she had undergone, and suffering the acutest pangs, both of mind and body, Lady Clairville began to think she had been rather mistaken in the views of happiness which she had formed; and that there must have been some bad arrangement which left one, scarcely yet past the prime of life, possessed of rank, wealth, beauty, and talents, thus unsought and thus alone. At this moment of sickness and solitude, when she saw more truly the fallacy of those precepts by which she had hitherto been guided, and how unequal was human wisdom to work out private ends, the English journals announced in lengthened paragraphs, the nuptials of the illustrious Duke of Strathaven with the beautiful Evelyn Cecil. The intelligence added a sickly stroke of mortification to her other feelings. The death of Lord Fitz-Henry had lightened one malicious hope in her bosom. The news of it reaching England, must, at least, for a time, cause the postponement of his father's marriage. But here, again, her evil aspirations were baffled, and it was not until two days after their wedding, just when entering the lovely scenery of Cumberland, that the express arrived which announced to the Duke and his happy bride the duel and its fatal consequences. To the feeling heart of the Duke, and the sensitive nature of his lovely Evelyn, the intelligence, of course, interrupted the gladsome current of their happiness. His untimely end was mourned with sincerity and affection. It was felt, also, that the hour of reform had been too long delayed—that he had been called away with all his corrupt and evil passions still clinging to him. It was an awful reflection, and left its due impression. But life now offered too many exquisite delights to the happy Strathaven for him to dwell too tenaciously on sorrowful images; and when at the end of a twelvemonth he held at the baptismal font a lovely infant, bearing his lost son's title, he breathed a fervent prayer for the blessings promised by the holy ceremony for the young Christian, while solemnly vowing within himself to watch with more of a parent's care over the offspring Providence had a second time bestowed upon him.

CHAPTER XLIX.

“As many arrows, loosed several ways,
Fly to one mark;
As many fresh streams run in one self same sea;
So, many thousand actions, once afoot,
End in one purpose.”

YEARS passed on, and still Julian was a wanderer. He yet carried the barbed arrow of disappointed affections in his bosom; and life, even amidst all the varieties of aspect under which he had now the means of viewing it, offered no compensation for the rankling wound his heart had sustained. Twice had that heart put forth the clinging tendrils of young and ardent passion. In the one instance, from the misdirection of their growth, they had been violently severed from the object around which they had en-

twinced. He had seen the necessity of their destruction, and acquiesced to the obligation; but still he suffered the aching void in his bosom—the rapid reaction which the cessation of any forcible excitement is accustomed to occasion. With regard to his love for Evelyn, arising as it had with his early years, and though for a time interrupted—gaining strength and ardor from that interruption—it was now the one corroding sorrow of his days. The perfect hopelessness of his affection seemed in no way to diminish it. It had begun with the purity of the feelings of childhood, it continued with the fervency of manhood; and the value of its object being in a measure enhanced on becoming the prize of one so distinguished as his successful rival, lent additional force to a sentiment which was destroying him. He believed that he had been treated with severity. Fancying that Evelyn had once returned his early love, he attributed her change to the one short period of his defalcation; and he thought his sin had been too severely visited. While those whom he had been taught to consider as bound to him by the tenderest affection, had looked on as if unmindful of the wreck his every hope had sustained. He knew that he had deserved much of what he had endured; he knew that there was none but himself and Lady Clairville who had been accessory to the present state of things; still he felt out of humor with the rest of the world, at least that world in which his young affections had so delighted. In this spirit he roamed throughout the various countries to which his caprice directed him, with heart and feelings dead to every species of enjoyment which they could offer to one less misanthropical than himself.

With every avenue of happiness closed, in a sense, wilfully, the researches of science, the speculations of philosophy, the study of manners, all failed in awakening any interest in his bosom. He entered the mines of Germany, the museums of Sweden, with the same inappetency. He was as little animated in the gay courts of Vienna or St. Petersburg, as when traversing the vast steppas of Russia, or lost amidst the forests of Bohemia. And when studying the primitive simplicity of Hungarian or Moldavian habits, penetrating the savage courts of Circassian princes, or sharing the sensual indolence of the turbaned denizen of Constantinople, still he was the apathetic and cynical Julian.

At those periods when his exhausted funds at the different bankers' to whom he had letters of credit, obliged him to have communication with England, he received the epistles which his devious route had rendered impossible to be forwarded. By one of these occasional despatches, he first learnt his mother's marriage, at the expiration of her year of widowhood, with the Prince de la Roche-Hudon; a young and dissipated Parisian, taking his title from some remote *terre*, which also placed a few thousands of francs within his scanty purse. A bitter smile passed over the lips of Julian as he read this information. “She has hastened retribution,” he muttered gloomily.

He next heard that the noble and wealthy Blanche had indeed given herself to him who had so long been the idolized object of her love. He felt that the Baroness de Cressy could not have better bestowed her hand, than on one who owned every distinction which virtue, talent, and manly beauty could give; though wanting the earthly possessions

which, in the world's estimation, would alone render him worthy the prize which he had won. Still the intelligence gave a deeper pang to the heart of Lord Clairville, than its morbid indifference for others had for some time incurred. He recollected that her love had taken rise with his own unrequited passion; that it had ripened with it, and then formed the band of union which had led the energetic Blanche to espouse so warmly the cause of Evelyn. She was now happy in the fruition of her dearest wishes. Herbert was repaid for the long privation which Lady Clairville's opposition to his claims had caused, by the sure possession of one so formed to adorn and improve each passing hour. All his family were now assembled to rejoice over this felicity but himself; and he was wandering alone, without aim or end, forgotten—perhaps despised. The unhappy man groaned aloud; and again wished he also could forget. Until that time all news from England must be saddening.

The next despatch, however, brought more legitimate cause for sorrow: it informed him that his venerable grandmother, the excellent Mrs. Cecil—his loved relative, had at length sunk from the bondage of mortality, into that sleep of death for which her whole life had been the holy preparation. Tears, abundant and from the heart, were now shed by Julian. They were the first that had dropped from his eyes during the course of the five years which had seen him an exile from his native shore. They seemed to soften all the asperities he had suffered to usurp the kindness of his nature; and from that hour he became a happier and a better man.

Mourning news again reached him. The Duchess of Strathaven had to weep the premature death of her infant—the third child which had blessed her union. Evelyn then was suffering and unhappy. Her felicity was to be tried and interrupted like that of others. Again Julian wept; but felt, as he thought with real sympathy of the poor mother's affliction, that there were more sacred sources of sorrow than that which he had suffered to benumb every power of his existence.

Time still passed on, but it was now spent happily and rationally. Still too restless to stay his wanderings, he turned his steps to the East; and inspecting the wonders of Egypt and all the touching localities of Palestine, found an interest in all his progress which he had till now failed in experiencing. Exploring every country with a zeal which led him to expose himself to many of the dangers of their insidious climates, he at length reaped the disasters which might be expected; and after a long and perilous pilgrimage across the great desert, he became suddenly ill at Bussora. In a few days he was reduced to the extremity of weakness by a raging and malignant fever. He lingered long ere he could be at all supposed out of danger; but at length the old Arab who attended him, pronounced that all bad symptoms had left him, though he was still too languid to proceed on his way.

During one of the nights when he was visited by those refreshing slumbers which so materially assisted his recovery, he had a long and agreeable dream of Evelyn. She was, as she had ever been, kind and affectionate; but there was an additional interest and charm in her society beyond that which he had ever before experienced, though love seemed entirely out of the question. There was so much of satisfaction

in his vision, that the desire came strong upon him, to return once more to England, and to the enjoyment of, at least, the friendship of those so dear to him, though the reciprocity of love was denied to him. His mind was soon resolved; and he set out upon his return with as much earnestness as he had evinced in quitting his country. His voyage across the Mediterranean was soon effected; and the mild sea breezes contributed most effectually to the perfect restoration of his health.

Arrived at Naples, whither Lord Clairville had sent servants and luggage previous to his expedition to Egypt, and from whence he intended to proceed to England, he found among the letters there awaiting him, one from the Princess de la Roche-Hudon. It was written in the most abject and afflicting style, beseeching him, as the only earthly friend to whom she could apply, to come immediately to her assistance. The letter, which had been written two months before, informed him that she was still at Paris, where she was undergoing a system of the most refined cruelty from the Prince, who she believed wished her death; and who, not content with having squandered and gambled away the whole of her fortune, now persecuted her with extreme malignity, and obliged her to submit to the severest privations.

Lord Clairville could not remain indifferent to so urgent an appeal from a mother; and one who, (in the better dispositions which had lately actuated him,) he now could see, had erred as much from misjudging anxiety for his interests, as from constitutional pride.

He proceeded with great speed to Paris; and on arriving there, lost no time in seeking his mother at the house from whence her letter had been addressed. It was situated in the Rue Rivoli; and going there, he found that she still occupied the *premier*.

She was much affected at seeing him; and returned his proffered embrace with almost convulsive tenderness.

Her grievances did not appear so great as she had given her son reason to suppose. It is true, the bulk of her property was spent—a result which she had in a measure incurred by marrying a perfect stranger, without any reservation of her fortune. The principal features of the “severe privations” she had mentioned consisted of the Prince having disposed of her carriage and horses, obliging her now to use a *fiacre* whenever she left home, and also having positively forbidden, and refused the supplies necessary for her giving a ball in honor of her niece, the Baroness de Cressy, who had lately arrived in Paris with her husband, Sir Herbert Cecil, the new ambassador from the British Court.

These miseries were efficaciously soothed by her son, who assured her that his fortune should always be appropriated to her wants, as long as they could be made separate from those of the profligate adventurer by whom she had been deceived; an affair of little difficulty, as she saw him but rarely, and then only when his necessities required some fresh sacrifice on her part.

Julian, after expressing his joy and surprise on finding his cousin Blanche so near, began to inquire for those from whom he had been so long separated. He learned that Captain and Mrs. Cecil were residing still at Riversdale; and that the Duke of Strathaven with his young Duchess lived chiefly at a magnificent place in the adjoining county, where

they led a most retired life; though at times their hospitality was extended, and, the Princess thought, a little approaching to ostentation and profuseness. They had five children; and report said that the Duchess looked as young and lovely as when she first caught the Duke. Julian sighed, not at the ill-temper manifested by the concluding phrase, but from the recollections crowding upon his mind. Still they were of a tempered nature; and he blessed Heaven that they were so.

"*A propos de bottes*," continued the Princesse, who seemed to have caught the style of *cancan* and levity of the Parisians, "your other old flame, Lady Florence, has made a strange *mesalliance*. She had become very methodistical previous to poor St. John's death; and now, to mend matters, has married the minister of a dissenting chapel at Cheltenham; who, from the most perfect eloquence and beauty of person, was of such popularity, that he had turned three titled dowagers and spinsters innumerable from the mother church, even before his powers had won the still lovely Florence and her enormous dower. They tell me she is very sentimental and very sanctified, and still gives assemblies where they play at 'commerce,' of which the pool consists of *stacks* of tracts for poor people."

"And Blanche?" said Lord Clairville, turning from the subject with disgust.

"Oh, I see very little of her. I think she is still rather stiff because I opposed to the last minute of my power her marriage with Sir Herbert. But why can you not go and see her this very night? They give a ball—and I am to be there. You can send for your valet, and dress here. My introduction, and your cousinship, will make a very good *billet d'invitation*."

Julian assented to this proposition with much pleasure. He felt that it was thus he should prefer first seeing Blanche, when the presence of a crowd would interpose with that emotion the meeting would be calculated to produce. However, when the carriage drove into the court of the brilliantly illuminated embassy, the heart of Lord Clairville beat high with undefined feelings, and it almost approached the nature of a relief, when, on entering the reception rooms, the Princesse was informed by one of the *attaches*, that Lady de Cressy was too unwell that evening to preside at her ball.

The Princesse and her son passed on into a card-room, comparatively thinly occupied, to the crowded ball-room. Julian there beheld Sir Herbert Cecil, encircled by some foreigners, apparently conversing on affairs of importance. The Princesse thought the moment favorable for presenting him; but he besought her yet to delay it. It was delightful for him to gaze for a few minutes on features so well known—so long lost sight of—without the interruption which all the interrogators of a first meeting must offer. However, the gratification was soon lost to him; for after a few instants, Sir Herbert, in company with one of the group of be-starred and mustachioed magnates, left the room by a door which apparently led to a more private part of the hotel.

Madame de la Roche-Huton soon took her place at one of the card tables; and Julian, after having in utter absence of mind, observed for some time the dull progress of the game, strolled listlessly back to the ball-room.

All was in the confusion of a numerous assembly

when he first entered; but the first strains of a quadrille being heard from the orchestra, all the *tray* promenaders at once drew to the side with the deference which dancing ever commands in France; while the dancers as quickly advancing, the quadrilles were formed, and Julian found himself standing close to a young lady, who, although her back was turned to him, showed, by the beautiful form of her bust, the dazzling whiteness of her skin, with the graceful contour of her head, a rare specimen of female loveliness. She was a countrywoman, too, to judge by some words uttered in a low gentle tone of voice to her partner. It was with an indescribable interest when it at length became her turn to advance in *Pole*, that Julian watched the *châssée croise*, which would bring her in face to himself. She turned; and what a moment was it to the observant Clairville: he beheld the very personification of Evelyn Cecil, as she was in her days of gladness and girlhood.

Could it be the Duchess of Strathhaven? He felt that it was impossible; for, however she might have preserved the appearance of youth, the radiant figure before him could certainly not have numbered more than seventeen years.

She was dressed with the most exquisite taste; and as the folds of her blonde dress hung around her lovely limbs, and betrayed a foot whose fairy dimensions might well have appropriated the "glass slipper," Julian was lost in a tumult of wonder and admiration.

When the quadrille was concluded, in a minute she was again lost to his view; but following the direction she had taken, he observed her partner to sign her to the chaperonage of a lady, whom he was not an instant in recognizing as his old friend Mrs. Stewart.

Nothing would have been more easy than an introduction; but that would have necessitated his making himself known; and Julian was still hesitating as to that step, when he was addressed by an old travelling companion, the Baron Harnheim, who was overjoyed at meeting one whose expeditions had so far exceeded his own. Ere Julian had answered two of the two thousand questions of the verbose Baron, the fair creature on whom his eyes were still fixed, again left her seat with another partner. He moved towards the dancers with the Baron; and in a pause, which his absence of mind and extreme inattention occasioned, he inquired if he knew the lovely girl who was dancing near them.

"Oh, *parfaitement bien*!" replied the Baron; "she is sister to his excellency. I will introduce you to her: I am extremely intimate with the whole family."

This information confirmed his suspicions of her identity, and a sudden wish rose in the mind of Julian. He begged the Baron to present him, without making his name and country known; in short, merely to mention him as his old *compagnon de voyage*. The introduction took place, and in a few minutes Julian was standing by the side of Laura Cecil, in the dance; for it was his own little cousin grown up to womanhood who had so completely fettered his attention. He had carefully avoided encountering the eye of Mrs. Stewart; and as Baron Harnheim had spoken to him in German, after presenting him, in which language the pretty Laura had joined, he still continued it, thinking it a more complete disguise.

There was something indescribably interesting in thus being by the side of his little playfellow of former days: who, though treating him with the pretty demureness of a new ball-room acquaintance merely called for, yet showed many symptoms of that vivacity which had characterized her childhood, and which seemed only waiting some more favorable occasion for displaying itself.

The quadrille was too soon finished; and Julian resigned his fair *dansuse* to her chaperon, with a sigh which arose from many mingled feelings.

On leaving the beautiful Laura, Julian went immediately in search of the Princesse; thinking that he ought no longer to delay making himself known to Sir Herbert; but he encountered them almost at the same moment evidently in search of himself.

Julian found his cousin the self-same affectionate and open-hearted being he had ever been. The meeting was happy beyond his best wishes; and it was only on condition that Clairville should join him at breakfast the next morning, that the delighted Herbert could suffer the interview to be ended; though the claims of his numerous guests had so often interrupted it. But Julian felt it almost a relief when the Princesse mentioned her wish to retire; his spirits were fatigued with the unusual excitement; and he found solitude almost necessary to recall him to the sober equanimity which had lately marked his disposition.

The next morning Blanche de Cressy had the exquisite happiness of being clasped to the bosom of one so dearly loved and so deeply regretted—the Julian she had ever considered and valued as a brother.

Laura Cecil was thunderstruck at his entrance; and also on finding that the handsome German, who, at that very moment, she was laughingly describing as listening with eyes instead of ears, and who had addressed her with the reverential devotion of a slave, was in reality her well-beloved cousin Julian Clairville. Her smiles and blushes betrayed the joyful emotions with which she was affected.

However, we may believe that there were deeper blushes and brighter smiles at the celebration of an event which the daily papers announced six months from that time—nothing less than the marriage of Lord Clairville with the second daughter of Admiral Cecil.

So it was: and the succeeding month found the whole happy family assembled once more at Oakwood, the scene of so many past joys and childish pleasures.

It was a beautiful sight, the re-union of so many loving and happy hearts before the altar where Julian plighted his vows to the young Laura; who personified, almost exactly, the beautiful bride who had bestowed herself upon the Duke of Strathaven nine years before. But there she stood, the sweet Evelyn herself, radiant in matured charms, and by her side clustered a group of lovely children. No longer was she the timid, shrinking girl, but the charming woman; her countenance beaming with happiness, which showed that it derived its source from the purest and best of springs. The Duke was near her, and on his arm was leaning the gentle Mrs. Cecil. The years which had passed had not left one furrow on his brow; it seemed as if the hand of her he loved, her freshness, her sweet presence, had warded off the approach of age. The scene was, indeed, one of deep interest. The favorite excellent

Blanche; her smiling countenance was the index of a happy mind; she, too, was followed by some sweet children; and in their dark eyes and clustering black curls they were easily to be recognized as belonging to the noble Herbert.

Julian, with all the tenderness of a lover, led the lovely girl forward. How affectionately was she looked upon by her sister, the Duchess! who, notwithstanding her dress, looked almost younger than ever; for her eyes were brilliant with tears of joy, and her cheeks, which were wont to be so pale, wore now the tint of the summer rose; but her dress, as we before observed, was anything but juvenile, although it could not hide her beauty or her age. The stiff satin dress and large Cashmere, the deep bonnet, and feathers, and veil, were all of a style unsuited to the still sylph-like form they shrouded; but it was Evelyn's little foible, that of endeavoring to make herself look old. Her dress, we have been told, was all planned to that effect; but it failed; and, like the child who puts on its grandmother's cap in sport, still the youthful visage peeping from beneath the ancient costume, rendered the youth of the masquerader only the more conspicuous. But we may guess the motive, and appreciate it accordingly; and, noble Duke, his feelings must have been most enviable! In looking round upon those who surrounded him, he could indeed say to himself, "This has been my own doing." So much prosperity and happiness he had created for others.

There stood the boy Edwin, now a handsome fine young man. My readers will, I think, rejoice to hear that he was adopted by the Duke, and was growing up an ornament to society, and the delight of his friends.

The bridesmaids consisted of two little de Cressy, and a fair Lady Evelyn; Lucy Cecil, a lovely girl of sixteen, completed the young party. Julian looked particularly handsome and distinguished, as he stood in his place by the altar. The Duke appeared to think so, for after gazing at him for some seconds, he sighed and turned his eyes upon the fair Duchess. Whether at that moment any disagreeable idea flashed before his mind, we cannot truly affirm; but if it did, for a brief instant only could it have found a place in his imagination, for the eyes he turned to meet were fixed upon him with that deep look of absorbing tenderness, of devoted love, which caused the warm blood to flow with joyful gush to his heart. Her expressive countenance seemed to say everything; that gratitude—*that* attachment could suggest, and she pressed a lovely boy closer to her side, as if she longed to express her love to the child all the feelings which fill her breast towards his father. The service was at length over, and it is now time to bid farewell to the readers of this simple story: before, however, is quite concluded, we must say a few words more upon the subject of our favorite heroine.

It would be impossible to do justice to her perfect felicity, or to describe her affection for her noble husband. It is lovely to see her hovering around him, watching every turn of his countenance, anticipating his slightest wish. She is much courted, much admired in society; but it appears that this admiration gives her more pain than pleasure, and she goes out as little as she possibly can, consistently with her rank and station. She is so fearful of giving the Duke the most trivial uneasiness, of making him

suppose for a moment that adulation from the young and gay can afford her pleasure, that her manner to strangers is dignified, almost repulsive; but at home to see her, she is again the child of nature, the happy unsophisticated Evelyn, the delight of all around her.

And the Duke, does he fully estimate this treasure? He does, indeed. The world censures him for giving up politics; but, as he says, what is the world to him, his hopes, his wishes, his dearest happiness is centred in one small focus.

His life, hitherto, had been one scene of turmoil and fatigue. He now rests from his labors; his sweet care is to administer to the felicity of the fair being who has changed the fitful cloudy scene of life into a bright and joyful sunshine. His children, too, are sources of intense interest; his fine lovely heir, — he remembers (and the thought is anguish) that his eldest born owed half the evils of his short career to the effects of a neglected education; and the Duke strives, by deep solicitude and watchfulness, to train

his younger children in a better path. The history of the Cecil family is now ended; they are happy, as they deserve to be, and their felicity is reflected upon all those around them. They remember with grateful feelings every kindness they received during their season of sorrow; prosperity has not made them forget that they have tasted the cup of adversity, and with hearts full of thankfulness, they are animated to unwearied exertion in well doing. And may every blessing continue to surround this excellent family: may the bonds of kindred and of friendship assume a hallowed and a sacred character, not as feeble ties, to be forever broken in a few fleeting years, but as the germ of a holy and precious union that will endure when time shall be no more. May the virtue and goodness of their lives transform the world in which they live, from a vale of tears to a path of pleasantness and peace, making "the wilderness and solitary place to rejoice, and the desert to blossom like the rose."

THE END.





